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SERMONS

ON

REGENERATION:

WHEREIN ITS

Nature, Necessity, and Evidences

ARE CONSIDERED, AND

PRACTICALLY IMPROVED,

BY

JOSEPH BARBER.

SECOND EDITION, CORRECTED AND ENLARGED.

A Seed shall serve him, it shall be accounted to the Lord for a Generation. Psalm xxii. 30.

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PREFACE.

IT is more than thirty years since these discourses were first published; and as they have been long out of print, and a new generation has since risen up, I have felt strongly inclined to republish them, before I quit the stage of mortality.

They are plain discourses, and such I meant them to be; for I think it my duty, and it has been my constant aim in the course of my ministry, to make the great things of God as plain to the understandings of my hearers, as I could; that, *by the manifestation of the truth, I may commend myself to every man's conscience*

in the sight of God. It is hardly possible to call your attention to a subject of greater importance, than that which is here treated on. Regeneration is a capital point of Christianity. Our Lord began with Nicodemus here, and it is the gate into the narrow way which leadeth unto life. If we are not born again, we are without God, without Christ, and without any well grounded hope of eternal life. But the new birth brings us near to God and Christ, and introduces us into the glorious privileges and blessings of the gospel.

I have endeavoured in these discourses, to instruct the ignorant, to awaken the secure, and rouse the careless sinner; to direct the convinced soul to the Lord Jesus Christ for life and salvation, and to establish the hearts of believers

in the faith, holiness, and comfort of the gospel; and if a divine blessing shall make my efforts effectual for these salutary purposes, my great end will be answered.

I beseech those, into whose hands these discourses may come, to read them over with care; to ponder the matters contained in them, in their hearts; and to be solicitous to know in their own experience, what it is to be born again.

In revising these sermons I have seen no reason for altering any of the sentiments contained in them; for after many years study and labour in the work of the sacred ministry, since their first publication, my views of the gospel are, substantially, the same as they were at the time when I delivered them; nay, I am more confirmed as to their truth and

importance: therefore all that I have now done, has been to make a few corrections in the language, and some additions where I thought it might be done to advantage.

I cannot be indifferent as to the success of this work, because I aim therein at the glory of God, and the salvation of men; and therefore, it is my earnest request to the dear people of God into whose hands these sermons may fall, that they will join with and help me, in praying for a blessing upon them.

J. BARBER.

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SERMON I.

JOHN III. 3.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.

THE doctrine of the new birth is a doctrine of such importance, that it ought to be frequently insisted upon by the ministers of Christ. Many hearers of the word are no better acquainted with it than Nicodemus was, with whom our Saviour was now discoursing. It was astonishing to that man to hear Jesus talk of a second birth *How can a man be born,* says he, *when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?* His con-

ceptions were low and carnal; he thought of nothing but a natural birth; whereas Christ was speaking of a spiritual birth, a change in and upon the soul, that makes a man *a new man*, or *a new creature*. Many amongst us never felt this change, this important change; and many have not so much as any idea concerning it. Ask them what it is? and they can give you no account of it, or at least no proper account.

By the context we are informed that Nicodemus was a great man amongst the Jews. Ver. 1, 2. *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.* Nicodemus was a man of eminence for his religious profession; for he was a *Pharisee*, and they were reckoned the strictest sect among the Jews. And he is said to be *a Ruler of the Jews*, and *a Master of Israel:* by

which it appears, that he was a person of great repute for his knowledge in the law of God; and it is highly probable that he was one of the Sanhedrim, or chief Council of the Nation. This man *came to Jesus by night*. Not openly; he was ashamed to do that, and afraid it would hurt his reputation. Nevertheless, being persuaded that Jesus was a teacher come from God, by the miracles he wrought, he wished very much to have some conversation with him, and to know what his doctrine was; and therefore, stole away to him by night.—Well, our Lord begins with him *about the new birth*, and asserts *the necessity* of it in the strongest terms, in order to a person's admission into the Kingdom of God. *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.* By the *Kingdom of God* in Scripture, is sometimes meant *the Kingdom of Grace* in this world; sometimes *the Kingdom of Glory* in that which is to come; and sometimes the expression

includes *both*. With great propriety we may understand it as including both in our text. By the *Kingdom of Grace* I understand the *Gospel Dispensation*; or to speak more distinctly, it denotes *the spiritual government of the Lord Jesus Christ in his Church and over his People*. It was foretold by the spirit of prophecy, that when the Messiah appeared upon earth, he should suffer and die in a shameful and ignominious manner, to make atonement for the sins of his people; and afterwards be highly exalted in heaven, as well as have a glorious kingdom upon earth, which should have its consummation in heaven. The prophet Daniel in particular spake of *this*, as the kingdom of the God of heaven which he would set up and give to the *Son of Man;* and foretold that this kingdom should be finally victorious over all other kingdoms. This we have in Dan. ii. 44. And again ch. vii. 13, 14. *I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of Heaven,*

and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Answerably to this prophetic account, the New Testament informs us, that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God by nature, condescended to become the Son of Man, and in our nature to humble himself and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: for which reason, God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Phil. ii. 6, 12. We are instructed that the kingdom of Christ is of large extent, yea,

that he has an universal dominion over all worlds. But within this very large extensive dominion he has a special kingdom upon earth; that is, he has a peculiar people, whom he has redeemed to God with his blood, and who are formed by his grace to love, serve, and glorify him. These are regenerate persons, Christ's willing subjects, made such in the day of his power; and he is their King in a peculiar sense, not only to give them laws, but also to protect, to bless, and save them. It may be proper to observe, that this spiritual kingdom of Christ in its external form and appearance, is constituted of persons who profess faith in him, and obedience to him as their God and Saviour. But alas! among these there are some, who are not born again, who profess to be Christ's people, and connect themselves with his church, yet their hearts are not right with him, nor their lives devoted to his service. Hypocrites there have been in the visible church as well as sound believers, and hypocrites

there will be. However the Lord knows them that are his; he can distinguish his sincere and faithful people from all others; he does, and will distinguish them. It may perhaps appear to be hardly consistent with the doctrine of the text, to admit that there are any persons in the spiritual kingdom of Christ, besides those that are regenerate, because the text says, *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* To this I answer, that though the Lord knows them that are his, because he searches the heart and tries the reins of the children of men, yet we do not; but must judge of others only by appearances; and when they profess faith in Christ and love to him, and we know nothing in their manner of life inconsistent with their profession, we are bound by the laws of Christ to receive them as fellow-members, and to esteem them as such. Yet it remains universally true, that *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,* that is, he cannot enjoy it,

he has no interest in the special and saving blessings of that kingdom. He may enjoy the external privileges of the Lord's people, but is a stranger to that union and communion with Christ, with which they are blessed. He has a name to live but is dead. He calls Christ his Lord and Master, but Christ will disown him. That is an alarming passage to this purpose, *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.* Matt. vii. 21, 22, 23. This shows what a dreadful case hypocrites are in: whatever they may think, the Lord will disown and reject them at last. How awful is this consideration!

But as to those that are regenerate, the kingdom of Christ is set up in their hearts, and he rules in them by his word and Spirit. They not only *profess* to be the Lord's, but are *really* his; enjoy communion with him; and are truly happy under his gracious care and government.

Much might be said respecting the glory and excellency of the *Lord's Anointed, the Great Immanuel, God with us;* and the happiness of them who have an interest in him, and are devoted to his service. But I wave these things: and shall only observe farther, that the perfection and consummation of the kingdom of grace will be in the kingdom of glory. The Lord Jesus is *now* training up his people for a better world; and as he is in possession of heaven for them, so he will certainly, according to his promise, bestow heaven upon them.

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God; he has no lot or part in it; he cannot enjoy the *blessings* of

this kingdom; nor is he fit for the *duties* of it. In this doctrine, our Lord suggests to Nicodemus *concerning himself*, that he was *the King*, *the Messiah*, who was come to set up the kingdom of God amongst men. This master of Israel looked upon him as a prophet, a teacher come from God; but Jesus intimates to him that his faith was quite defective, and that he ought to consider him in a higher character, *viz.* as *that King*, *that Messiah*, *that Saviour* of the world, whom God had promised, and the Jews expected. And before he concludes his discourse, he explains himself more clearly and fully upon this point; as you may see in verses 13, 14, 15, 16. *No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish but have everlasting life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his*

only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

I would farther remark here, that our Lord, *by his doctrine of the new birth*, directly struck at Nicodemus's pride and self-righteousness, as a Pharisee. The Pharisees were a generation who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: they depended on their own righteousness for life and salvation: and whilst they were very strict in the outward observance of the law, and of ritual matters, they neglected purity of heart, and the weightier matters of the law. But Christ tells this Pharisee, that in order to his entrance into the kingdom of God, *he must be born again.* All this pharisaical righteousness would not avail him, no; he must give it up as quite insufficient to justify and save him; and must look for righteousness and salvation in the Son of God; and he must become quite *a new man*, be entirely changed in his notions

and views of things, and in his temper and disposition of mind. Agreeably to this, Mr. Charnock observes, "Christ's answer "very well suits him: You must become "a new man, if you would have acquaint- "ance with Evangelical Mysteries. Away "with your old notions, and pharisaical "pride. Deny your honour, credit, and "whatsoever partakes of the name of *self*. "A legal frame, and a pharisaical righte- "ousness will not advance you to the "kingdom of God."

In farther discoursing on this subject, what I intend will lie principally in three things.

I. To consider *the nature of regeneration.*

II. *The necessity* of it.

III. *The evidences* of it. Together with the *application, or improvement* of the subject.

First, I would lead you to consider the *nature of regeneration; or what it is to be born again.* It is from God's Revela-

tion alone we are to learn this; I mean from his holy word. And O! that his Spirit may enable me to speak of it according to his word, and for the instruction and advantage of your souls! Happy they that are taught of God!

From the character of Nicodemus, we have reason to think, he must have been conversant with the holy Scriptures; and have had a good degree of knowledge in the *letter* of them: but still he was a stranger to the *spirit* of them, that is to the spiritual meaning and design of them; and therefore it was, he was so ignorant of the new birth, and so surprised at our Saviour's doctrine about it. Upon which the same Mr. Charnock justly observes, "That a man "may have great knowledge in the letter of "the Scripture, and yet not understand "the necessary and saving doctrines of it."

The doctrine our Lord advanced was *no new doctrine;* it was no other than was taught in the Scriptures of the Old Testament; and in some places nearly in the

same language. For instance; therein was asserted *the necessity of men's having a new heart*, which is also spoken of as the gift of God; *the necessity of repentance for sin; and of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ;* or (which is the same thing) of faith in the mercy of God, through the promised Messiah. This, I say, is the doctrine of the Old Testament; and it is in effect the same with that which Christ preaches, *that a man must be born again, or else he cannot see the kingdom of God.* Besides, as I just now hinted, there are some passages in the Old Testament, wherein we have the very phrase of *being born*, (referring to the new birth) although it is not exactly this, *of being born again.* As Psalm lxxxvii. 5. *And of Zion it shall be said, this and that man was born in her.* And Isai. lxvi. 8. we have the expression of *a nation being born at once.* This is meant of a *spiritual birth; a great number of persons being born to God; made his children by grace, really and savingly*

converted to him. So that if Nicodemus had rightly understood the Holy Scriptures, he would not have been such a stranger to the doctrine of the new birth, as it appeared he was.

But to come to the point, *What is it to be born again?* In answer to this question, it will be necessary to speak; 1st negatively; 2dly. positively: That is, first, to show you, *what it is not;* and then, *what it is.*

First, I would show you, *what it is not*, that I may guard you against taking up with such things for the new-birth as fall short thereof; and yet are frequently, I fear, mistaken for it.

1. Knowledge, the mere knowledge of God and divine things, is not the new-birth; for a person may have great knowledge of the Scripture, and the things of God, and yet not be born again. This appears from what the Apostle says, 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2. *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not cha-*

rity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge: and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. This charity the Apostle speaks of, is *Love;* love to our fellow Christians and our fellow men; and that love springing from a principle of love to God; or in other words, from faith in Christ, which worketh by love. This, is that grace, that noble grace of charity, which the word of the Lord recommends. They sink it too low by far, who imagine charity to be nothing else but *alms-giving*, or acts of beneficence to the poor and distressed. I readily grant that this is included in it, or rather is one effect of true Gospel-charity: but that it is not all that is meant, appears from this consideration, that the Apostle supposes, a person *may give all his goods to feed the poor,* and yet *be destitute of charity,* ver. 3. But this would be im-

possible, if charity consisted in alms-giving, and was to be confined to it.—Nor is the charity the Apostle speaks of, what some people extol by that name, viz. *An indifference about religious sentiments, and thinking well of others, whatever their principles may be.* According to them, we are to have charity for all sorts of heretics; to have charity for Jews, Deists, Atheists, &c. that is, we are to believe, they may be very good men, and may be saved, notwithstanding any erroneous principles they have imbibed. But the Gospel knows nothing of this sort of charity; it is quite repugnant to the Gospel; and I believe, has done much mischief in the world. What! are we, under the notion of charity, to give up the glorious truths of the Gospel of Christ? No, by no means. It is very true, that we are to have charity for Infidels, Jews, &c. but not in the sense of these men. True charity is to pity, and pray for them; and if it lies in our power, to endeavour to convince them; but to

think they are safe in such errors is not agreeable to the scripture of truth. No, the scripture represents them as in a most dangerous condition; and it would be the truest charity to tell them so. But this by the way.—What we assert is, that *knowledge without grace* is not sufficient. It is desirable to have a good head; but it is far better to have a good heart. Without some knowledge the heart cannot be good; but there is many an illiterate Christian that has the saving knowledge of God, whilst some others have a head full of knowledge, but a heart destitute of grace. Our Lord acknowledges and adores the sovereignty of God in this matter: *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.*

2. Baptism is not the new-birth.---Some have taken up the idea, that Baptism is Regeneration; but it is a great mistake,

and of dangerous tendency. Baptism is the sign; but there may be this, where there is not the thing signified. A person may be baptized, and yet not be regenerated by the Holy Ghost. Witness Simon Magus, who was baptized, and yet afterwards appeared to be in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity: Acts viii. 23. It is upon a *visible interest in Christ*, that persons are to be baptized. We can not pretend to know their hearts; but if they are *visibly in Christ*, (whether adult or infants) they have a right to baptism.--- Now it is often the case that persons are visibly in Christ, who have not a real and saving interest in him. They have a right to church-privileges, and church-ordinances *before men*, when they have no right to heaven *before God*. *The baptism that saves us*, (says the Apostle Peter,) *is not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.* 1 Peter, iii. 21.

And if we attend to our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus, we may see from thence, that it is not enough *to be born of water*, unless we are also *born of the Spirit*. Ver. 5, 6. *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* I am inclined to think that our Lord intends baptism *by being born of water*, because that is the sign of regeneration, and is the regular appointed way of being admitted into the kingdom of God, or church of Christ in this world. And I the rather think so, because at this time John the Baptist was baptizing, and was preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins: that is, he was preaching up the necessity of repentance, and of the purification of men's souls, as the thing signified by his baptism. And in this chapter we read also of Christ's

baptizing, ver. 22 and 26. So that I think it probable, he might refer to baptism in his expression of *being born of water*.--- Nevertheless, it will not be sufficient *to be born of water*, unless we are also born of *the Spirit*, the Holy Spirit of God. *This* is the principal thing, *the other* is but the sign; and the sign without the thing signified, will avail us nothing to our salvation. There must be, what the Apostle calls, *the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.* Our hearts are quite depraved, and therefore must be renewed by the Holy Spirit, in order to fit us for the enjoyment of God, and heaven. Upon this, our Lord grounds the necessity of regeneration: *That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* In our natural birth we are *flesh*, wholly carnal and corrupt; naturally inclined to mind earthly things, and to neglect spiritual and heavenly. *But that which is born of the Spirit is spirit:* that

is, there is something in the regenerate soul that bears a resemblance to its Divine Author, the Holy Spirit of God ; or there is a principle of grace, inclining the soul to God, and spiritual things.

3. Legal convictions, and terrors of conscience for sin, are not the new-birth. *Conviction* and *conversion* are not the same thing. I believe there is no conversion without some conviction ; yet there may be convictions without conversion : yea, there may be strong convictions, great terrors of soul for sin, which may never end in a real conversion to the Lord :— Ahab was convinced, but not converted. Felix was made to tremble at Paul's doctrine of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come ; but we have no reason to think he was converted.

4. There may be a visible alteration and reformation in a person, where there is not the new-birth.—We have an instance of this, in Herod. Mark vi. 20. *Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man*

and holy, and observed him: and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. Here were some things that looked well in Herod: he had a respect for John, and reverence of him, because he knew him to be a just and holy man; he attended to his preaching, and heard him gladly; and more than that, he reformed his life in some things; the text says, *he did many things.* This was going a great way, for a great man, such as Herod was; but it was not going far enough. Still he was not born again; and there was one thing he could not do, that is, he could not bear to part with Herodias.---So it is, there may be some reformation, where there is no saving work of grace; a man may leave some sins, but keep others; he may perform some duties, but neglect others; and he may do many things in a self-righteous way, and still come short of Christ, and the Gospel-salvation.

5. Morality is not the new-birth: a

man may be honest and sober, faithful to his trust and a useful member of civil society, and yet be a stranger to the new-birth.---I do not speak against these things: God forbid. Morality is included in Christianity; insomuch that a man cannot be a Christian, that is not a moral man; but a man may be a moral man, that is not a Christian. Morality, unless it be joined with real godliness, and unless it proceed from faith in Christ, (faith working by love) is no evidence that a person is born of God. The young man mentioned in the Gospel that came to Jesus with this question, *Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?* appears to have been a good moralist; yet we find he was not a Christian; for he could part with Christ, and eternal life, rather than with his worldly riches. Luke xviii. 18, and following verses.---So it is a common thing for moral men to prefer the world, to prefer themselves and their own righteousness, to Jesus Christ, and his righteousness. They

are righteous in their own eyes, and despisers of the righteousness of Christ.---But the new-birth teaches the soul, *to count all things but loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and for an interest in his righteousness.* It humbles the soul, empties it of *self* and brings it to live upon Christ and his righteousness. Regeneration, I may say, makes Christ supreme in the soul; so that, he is the principle, he is the pattern, and he is the end of the man's life. There is that regard to God, and Christ in every regenerate man, which is not to be found in any mere moralist.

6. There may be a profession, yea a great profession of religion, where regeneration is wanting. Men, may profess faith in Christ, love to him, and great zeal for his cause, and yet be strangers to the new birth, and not have the root of the matter in them. Let me remind you, *It is not every one that saith unto him, Lord, Lord, that shall enter into the kingdom*

of heaven. Persons may be church-members, and go frequently to the sacrament, and yet be no better than hypocrites at bottom. Yea, men may be preachers of the gospel to others, and yet themselves be cast away. Matt. vii. 22, 23. *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity.*

Thus I have mentioned several things, which persons are apt to mistake for the new birth, but which fall short of it. I come now to show you *positively*, what the new birth is. And in general, *it is that work of God upon the soul of a man, whereby he is made a real Christian; a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and a willing disciple or follower of him.* The new birth is the formation and the production of the new creature; or it is God's

making a man a new creature. It is God's giving him a new heart; in consequence whereof he leads a new life. It is God's infusing life into his soul, so that he begins to live after a spiritual, holy, and heavenly manner, which he did not before. Or in other words: *It is that work of God upon the soul, whereby it is quickened, or made alive unto God; and whereby it is formed in some measure after the image of God, and fitted for the operations of a spiritual divine life.* I have not time to enlarge upon this at present; and therefore shall do little more than mention a few scriptures, where this important change is pointed out. Ezek. xxxvi. 26. *A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.* It is expressed by a new creation. Eph. ii. 10. *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.* And it is expressed by God's giving a new life.

Eph. ii. 1. *You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.* These expressions denote a change in all the powers and faculties of the soul. Not that the natural faculties are changed in a physical sense, or as natural faculties: No; as natural faculties they are the same after regeneration as before; the same understanding, will, memory, &c. But they are changed in a moral sense; the understanding is enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, and spiritual things; the will is renewed; the affections are spiritualized; and the whole soul turned to God. The regenerate person has very different apprehensions and views of himself and of many other things from what he formerly had. If he was a self-righteous person before, who thought that he could stand before God in his own righteousness as sufficient to justify him, he is now convinced to the contrary; he sees himself a miserable sinner, altogether vile and guilty, and quite undone, unless he can obtain mercy.

Such a revolution took place in the mind of the apostle Paul at the time of his conversion. He says, *I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.* After this he was very solicitous to *win Christ and be found in him, not having his own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is of the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.* The righteousness of Christ is exceeding precious to the person that sees himself unrighteous, condemned by God's holy law, and that it is impossible for him to be justified by any duties or obedience of his own. Or, supposing the regenerate person to have been a careless sinner, who never minded religion in good earnest, he is now convinced of his folly, ingratitude, and wickedness, in living without God and in opposition to him, from whom he has derived his being and all his blessings. He thought little or nothing before of the evil and danger of sin, but now he perceives it to be a most dreadful evil. The

great God was seldom in his thoughts, he had scarcely any fear of his wrath, and no right sense of the worth of his favour; but now he sees it would be a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God, and that without his favour and friendship it is impossible to be happy. Once he could see no great beauty and excellency in Jesus Christ why he should desire him; but he now beholds him as the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely, and now it is his highest concern to have an interest in him and his salvation. Formerly he thought highly of the world and had great expectations of finding happiness from it; but now he sees his mistake and is throughly convinced that the world cannot supply the wants, nor satisfy the desires of his immortal soul, and that his only happiness is in God through Jesus Christ. Thus his eyes have been opened, his heart changed and turned. He is become *a new creature* in Christ Jesus, *old things are past away, behold all things are become new.*

SERMON II.

JOHN III. 3.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

IF we may judge of the importance of *what is said*, by the *solemnity* with which it is spoken; (and *this* we certainly may do, when the Lord himself is the speaker) then there is a great importance in the doctrine of our text: for nothing could be spoken with greater solemnity by our blessed Lord: *Verily, verily, I say unto thee*, &c.

By the Kingdom of God here is meant the Messiah's Kingdom, and it takes in the *Kingdom of Grace* in this world, and the *Kingdom of Glory* in that which is to come. And except a man be born again,

he cannot see this Kingdom of God ; that is, he cannot enjoy the blessings of Divine Grace, nor will he ever enjoy the Glory to come. It is true, that without the new birth he may be admitted by baptism into the external privileges of Christ's Kingdom, or church in this world ; because baptism depends upon a visible interest in Christ ; and all that are the visible subjects of his kingdom have a right to this ordinance before men : nevertheless, I say, without the new birth no man has an interest in the special saving blessings of the Kingdom of Grace, nor has he any right to the Kingdom of Glory.

In discoursing on this subject, I proposed to consider,

I. The nature of regeneration.

II. The necessity of it.

III. The evidences of it.

1. To speak of the nature of the new birth : upon this I have mentioned some things to prevent dangerous mistakes, which persons are apt to fall into. I have

showed, that *mere knowledge is not the new birth: baptism is not the new birth, &c. But it is that work of God upon the soul of a man, whereby he is made a real Christian;* that is, a sincere believer in Christ, and a willing follower of him. Or in other words: *It is that work of God upon the soul of a man, whereby he is made alive to God, is formed in some measure after the Divine Image, and is fitted for the operations of a spiritual life.* By natural birth we are made men, that is, partakers of the human nature: In the spiritual birth we are made Christians, and partakers of a Divine nature. In the former, we bear a likeness to the first Adam; in the latter, a resemblance to the second Adam.

Some good Divines have chosen to distinguish between *regeneration* and *conversion*, in this manner: that regeneration is God's infusing a principle of spiritual life into us; and conversion is the exertion of that principle. In regeneration, man is

wholly passive; in conversion, he is active. In regeneration there is a change of heart, so that a man is inclined to turn to God; but conversion is his actual turning to God by Jesus Christ.

However, if we thus distinguish between regeneration and conversion, yet we are to remember, that in adult persons they are not to be separated. There can be no regeneration without conversion, and no conversion without regeneration. I grant that infants may be regenerated, when it would not be proper to say they are converted; because being incapable of exercising reason, it is not to be thought, they can exercise grace. But it cannot be said of any adult person that he is regenerated, without being converted. As soon as ever the principle of life is infused, it begins to operate; as soon as ever the heart is changed, there is an actual turning unto God. So it is in the natural world; as soon as a living child is born, it begins to discover the operations of natu-

ral life: and agreeably hereunto, as soon as ever a soul is born again in the world of grace, it begins to discover the operations of spiritual life. If then, we would describe regeneration, we cannot do it a right, without considering conversion as included in it, or inseparably connected with it. If we pretend to show you what that life is which the soul obtains in regeneration, we must give you some account of the acts and effects of it; or show you how the regenerate soul acts towards God and towards men.

As to *effectual calling*, it seems to me to include both regeneration and conversion. *Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified,* &c. Effectual calling, is nothing else but the outward call of the word made effectual to a person's real and saving conversion to God. Now God's making it effectual, is the work of regeneration; and the soul's obeying this call is its actual conversion to God. But not to

insist any farther upon this—I would now enter into some particulars to explain more fully what the new birth is.

1st. It is the *work of God.* He is the author of it, and no power less than his is sufficient to effect it. The word ανωθεν, signifies *from above;* so that the text might be read, *born from above,* as well as *born again.* In the context, it is expressed by being *born of the Spirit,* that is, the Holy Spirit of God. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: *which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* John i. 12, 13. In this work there is a display of the greatness of God's power; for none but he can change the heart, and turn it to himself. The scripture expresses it *by a new creation:* Eph. ii. 10. *for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them,*

To create is the prerogative, or it is the sole act, of God. It was He, who created all things out of nothing at first; and it requires the same power to make a sinner a new creature. Here it is to be considered, that Satan has first got possession of the sinner's heart, and will do all he can to keep his possession; wherefore there must be a power superior to his, to drive him out. Luke xi. 21. *When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.* But besides Satan, there is the man's own corruption to be conquered. There is darkness and blindness of mind as to spiritual things; hardness of heart; perverseness of will; carnality of affection; yea, enmity against God. And to conquer these, so that the man shall become a new man, and yield himself up to God, as one that is alive from the dead,

This, this is the work of Almighty Power and Grace. Regeneration is sometimes in scripture compared to a resurrection from the dead. This we know is the work of God; and it is as truly his work, to quicken the soul when dead in trespasses and sins. Yea, the apostle observes, there is the same greatness of power to be seen in raising a soul to spiritual life, as was manifested in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Eph. i. 19. *And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward, who believe: according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead.* And in this work of God, we may discern the greatness of his mercy, as well as of his power. To this purpose are those remarkable words of the apostle, Eph. ii. 4. *But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved.)* What wonderful

mercy is here, that God should take a dead sinner, and make of him a living saint! that he should take an enemy, a rebel, and make him a friend, and admit him to the privileges of his family! This mercy of God is *singular mercy;* and the more so, because it is the earnest of eternal mercy: for *whom God calls he justifies, and whom he justifies, them he also glorifies.*

But here it may be asked, how comes it to pass that God commands men to make themselves a new heart, to repent and believe, if it be not in their power? To this, I answer, man's inability as to these things, is a moral inability, or it is owing to a moral pravity; and therefore God has a right command, though man has not power to obey. If indeed, the blessed God were to command such things, as men have not *natural* powers and faculties for, then his commands would be unreasonable, and their disobedience could not be criminal: as if he were to command

them to create a world, to controul the laws of nature, or the like. But in commanding men to repent, to believe, &c. he commands nothing but what they have natural powers and faculties for the performance of, if those powers were not under a moral pravity, and indisposition. There is a depraved heart or will in man, which is averse to these things. Agreeably to this, our Lord lays the blame upon *the will* in the unbelieving Jews. John v. 40. *Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.* They had prejudices against him, and would not come: they loved sin, and were joined to their idols, and could not bear to part with them. And it is much the same with men now, when called to repent and believe: their hearts are otherwise engaged, and they are averse to these things. But who will say, this is a sufficient excuse for not doing what God commands? If a moral pravity was an excuse, then it would follow, that the more wicked a man grows, the less evil there is in his

sins; because his moral pravity is thereby increased, and consequently he is less capable of doing that which God requires. Moreover, it is to be considered here, that what God has commanded, he has likewise promised in the covenant of grace. Does he command us *to make ourselves a new heart?* He has promised *to give a new heart.* It is a free and indefinite promise: so that the command should drive us to the promise, or to look to God for what he has promised.

I will add, that the commands of God condemn the carelessness of men, in that they are so negligent about their souls, so unconcerned about the new birth, about faith, repentance, &c. God requires them to attend to these things, but they continue unconcerned about them.

And as to those that are converted, the Lord makes use of commands, exhortations, invitations, &c. to awaken and preserve in them a concern about these things: so that they are appointed of the Lord for

good, and made use of for good, to their souls.

2. I remark that regeneration is *the beginning of spiritual life in the soul.* Then the soul is quickened or made alive to God: as the apostle John expresses it, there is a passing from death to life. 1 John, iii. 14. *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.* Some have spoken of this as an instantaneous work, and doubtless it is so; for there is a certain instant in which spiritual life is begun, and the soul does pass from death to life. Nevertheless, we are not to imagine that the soul always knows the exact time or instant, when it was new born. There are some that can tell the time *when*, and the manner *how*, very distinctly: but there are many that have the most substantial evidences of regeneration, who cannot tell the time, when they were born again. The holy Spirit works upon them in a silent gentle way: and though there is a time

when he does effect a saving change in them, yet they are not able to tell exactly when it was done. We ought to consider here, that though the work be done instantaneously, yet there is commonly a preparatory work of conviction: and in some persons there are many convictions, many thoughts about religion, and it may be, many duties attended to and performed, before the work be savingly wrought. At times they seem to be almost persuaded to be Christians, but are not altogether persuaded: they experience some changes in themselves, before they experience the saving change. To this purpose, Mr. Haliburton speaks of himself: "I had "and did many things. I was almost per- "suaded to be a Christian. I had under- "gone many changes, but not the great "change. I was not born again of God. "I was not begotten anew, and made a "child of God through a living faith in "Christ Jesus."

This leads me to remark,

3. *The first and great thing* the Spirit of God does in regeneration, is *to work faith in the soul*, and thereby to unite it to the Son of God. So in Gal. v. 6. compared with Chap. vi. 15. the apostle tells us, *the new creature is faith which worketh by love.* The Holy Scripture often speaks of a spiritual union between Jesus Christ and his people; and informs us that it is by faith, this union is effected. *He dwells in their hearts by faith. He lives in them*, and they live in him, and upon him by faith. Now that faith, by which a soul is united to Christ, is of the operation of God; wrought by his Holy Spirit. The soul in this matter is first passive, then active. It is the Spirit of God that produces the principle of faith, or that enables the soul to believe; and then the soul exercises faith, actually looks to Jesus, and comes to him for salvation. The poor soul was before shut up in unbelief, as it were, and could not come forth. Being awakened it saw its guilt, and misery,

its need of Christ, and salvation, and was full of fear and distress: but alas! it could not believe, could not rest and rely upon Jesus Christ for its own salvation. But in the time and manner that seem best to divine wisdom and goodness, the Holy Spirit applies some portion of the world with such power, or gives the soul such a view of Christ according to the word, that it is persuaded and enabled to believe on him for salvation. This is expressed in the sacred volume, *by the gospel's coming, not in word only, but in power, in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.* 1 Thess. i. 5. In another place the apostle Paul expresses it, by *God's revealing his son in him:* Gal. i. 16. and in another, he speaks *of his shining in the hearts of his people, to give them the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.* 2 Cor. iv. 6. It appears to me from scripture evidence, that the gospel is the instrument, and the Holy Ghost the agent, in working faith. *Faith*

cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, Rom. x. 17. The gospel externally reveals the Blessed Object of faith, as a free and suitable Saviour for us; the Spirit internally and efficaciously reveals him. I know that many who have had a religious education, and have been born of God in the early part of life, cannot so distinctly tell the way and manner in which they have been brought to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. They were instructed in the doctrines of the gospel, and had notions of them in their minds; and by means hereof the Divine Spirit has wrought faith in them in a secret, silent, and gentle way. But as to those, who have been able to give a more distinct account of the Lord's gracious dealings with their souls, their experience has been similar to what I have been describing. They have been awakened, and convinced of their lost condition by reason of sin, and effectually taught their need of Christ and salvation. But

they could not believe, nor take any comfort from the promises, nor trust in Christ to save them; till at length, by some text of scripture brought to the heart with a divine power and evidence; or by some application of Christ and gospel-grace to the soul, they have been prevailed upon, and enabled to believe.

I remember the time, when I was puzzled with this thought or question: If we must be born again before we can believe, then to what purpose are the invitations and encouragements of the gospel to believe? but this difficulty quite vanishes, if we consider, that our being born again consists in the Spirit's working faith in us: and as he works it by the instrumentality of the gospel, therefore there is a great propriety in the exhortations and invitations of the gospel, which are addressed to sinners to encourage them to come to Jesus for salvation; for if the Spirit operates with them, and carries them to the heart with light and power, then the droop-

ing soul is enabled to believe. Mr. Marshall in his Gospel Mystery of Sanctification has something to this purpose. "Regeneration," says he, "is necessary to salvation; and therefore many would find it "wrought in themselves, before they trust "on Christ for salvation. But consider "what regeneration is; it is a new begetting or creating us in Christ, in whom "we are partakers of a divine nature, "far different from that which we received "from the first Adam. Now faith is the "uniting grace, whereby Christ dwelleth "in us, and we in him; and therefore it "is the grace wrought in our regeneration, "and the means of all the rest; when you "truly believe you are regenerated, and "not till then. Those that receive Christ "by believing, and those only, are the sons "of God; *which are born, not of blood, "nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the "will of man, but of God.*" It may be proper to observe concerning faith, that when a soul is brought to believe in Jesus

Christ, it is unbottomed from self, (if I may use that expression) and made to trust in Christ alone for salvation. He comes to Jesus as a lost sinner in himself; sees that all his hope and help lies in the Lord; is glad that he has such a refuge to fly to; and to find that he can trust and hope in him for righteousness and salvation. One thing more I would observe, viz. that when a soul truly believes, then he begins to live a spiritual and holy life; *for true faith works by love, and purifies the heart.* I much approve of what some divines have said of faith, viz. that it is a radical grace. Other graces grow up out of it, and depend upon it. For instance, if there be true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, there will be evangelical repentance attending it; an humble, contrite spirit, with an hearty mourning for sin, and a turning from it unto God. Where there is faith, there is love to Christ, love to his people, his word, ordinances and ways. The man that cordially believes the gospel,

and believes in Jesus for all salvation, will be careful to have his conversation becoming the gospel, and to live to the Lord. I shall conclude this discourse with a few words of use, and improvement.

1st. Do not expect too much in regeneration, or carry it too high in your thoughts. As on the one hand some sink it too low, so on the other hand some raise it too high. If you expect to be full-grown Christians at first, you will be mistaken. You know, that when a child is born it is but weak and small at first; so when the child of grace is born it is but weak at first; weak in knowledge, in faith, in experience, and obedience. In Christ's family there are *babes*, as well as *young men*, and *fathers*. It is an unspeakable mercy to be of the family, although we are but babes. We are first to look to the truth of grace, namely, that we entirely trust in Christ for salvation, unfeignedly love him, and desire and endeavour to live to his glory: and then it becomes us to consider the strength of grace in ourselves.

That is a precious text, for the encouragement of weak believers. Matt. xii. 20. *A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.*

2. It is right for ministers of the gospel to call men to faith and repentance, and to set before them scriptural motives for this purpose, because these are means which the Holy Spirit makes use of in working faith and repentance in the hearts of men.

I am sensible that some object to ministers calling upon unconverted sinners to repent, to believe the gospel and turn to God; because, say they, these are dead in sin, and have no power to perform such works. Now although I allow the premises to be true I think it is a false inference that is drawn from them. In this case it is to be considered, that we ministers come in the name of the Lord, we use the means which he has appointed, and if he is pleased to accompany them with his blessing, then the dead hear his voice and live. The

Almighty usually works by means, both in the natural and spiritual world. And will any maintain this as a right principle, that means are not to be used, because in themselves they are not sufficient to accomplish the end. People do not act upon this principle in the natural world: they use means for the preservation of life and health and for other purposes, when they know and confess that without the divine blessing these means will be ineffectual. Why then should such a principle be adopted in the spiritual world? God sent the prophet Ezekiel to prophesy to the dead. Ezek. xxxvii. 1—4. *The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, and caused me to pass by them round about, and behold, there were very many in the open valley, and lo, they were very dry, and he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? and I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, prophesy*

upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.

In like manner, ministers at the command of God are sent forth to prophesy to the dead in sin; and although they cannot by any power of their own make them hear the word of the Lord and live, he who sends them can easily do it. The apostle Paul was sent by the Lord Christ to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, *to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive the forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ.* Acts xxvi. 17, 18. Was Paul equal to this work? Was he able to produce these blessed effects? Not at all; nevertheless, by his ministry as the means, a great number of souls were made alive to God. Ministers of the gospel are sent upon the same design, and it is their business and should be their endeavour to speak to the consciences of men, and to persuade

them by such arguments as the word of the Lord furnishes them with, to forsake their evil ways and return to God by Jesus Christ. I hope I have said enough to show that the sentiment I oppose is unscriptural. However, let me add, that the Holy Spirit makes use of various modes of address in the inspired writings, all which have a tendency to awaken the consciences, and excite the attention of sinners to the concerns of their salvation. There are commands, exhortations, threatenings, promises, invitations, and expostulations addressed to them, and since we find these in the Bible, many ministers besides me, think themselves warranted to make use of them in calling sinners to repent and return to God by Jesus Christ.

This mode of preaching appears to me most agreeable to the mind of God, and best adapted to accomplish his gracious design of saving the souls of men.

SERMON III.

JOHN III. 3.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

I PROPOSED to consider the nature, necessity, and evidences of regeneration. It is the *First* which we are considering and for a definition of regeneration, I gave you this; it is that work of God upon the soul of a man, whereby he is made a real Christian; or whereby he is made alive to God; is formed in some measure after the Divine Image; and is fitted for the operations of a spiritual divine life.

I have explained *this* in three particulars:

1. It is the work of God, and therein is a glorious display of his wonderful power and mercy.

2. It is the beginning of spiritual life in the soul.

3. The first and great thing in regeneration is the producing of *faith* in a man's soul, and thereby bringing him to a vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is the first and chief grace; all other graces depend upon it and grow up out of it. If there is true faith, there will be evangelical repentance; love to Christ and charity to men; and a disposition of soul to follow the Lord Jesus.

4. I now proceed to remark that, by regenerating grace the soul is changed in some measure into the image of God. Therefore *the new man is said to be renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him:* Col. iii. 10. And the apostle exhorts the believing Ephesians, *To put off the old man, and to put on the new man, which,* says he, *after God is created in righteousness and true holiness,* Ephes. iv. 24. When God made man at first, he made him in his own

image, and after his own likeness; but when man fell, he lost the image of his Maker, which was the glory of his nature; and became a dark, depraved, sinful creature. Now regeneration is the soul's recovery to God's image; or the restoration of God's image to the soul. It is the beginning of that good work, which is afterwards carried on in the soul's gradual sanctification. The new creature, as appears from scripture, is formed after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. The darkness of the mind is in some measure removed; and there is infused some knowledge of God and divine things. The man's eyes are opened, and he sees things in a different manner from what he once did. He has other views *of himself, of his sins, of his soul, of Christ, of death and judgment, of heaven and hell,* than he once had.—His will is renewed and turned to God. It was once in direct opposition to the will of God, and averse to that which

is good; but now it is inclined to seek and serve him, to choose him for a portion, and to delight itself in him. The man is willing to be what God requires him to be, and to do what God enjoins him to do. The language of his heart is, *O Lord, truly, I am thy servant, I am thy servant. Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God: thy spirit is good, lead me into the land of uprightness.* I do not say there is a perfect conformity in the regenerate soul to the image of God: but this I say, that there is a new bias and disposition given to the soul; so that, in its prevailing inclination, its firm resolution, and its habitual conduct, it is for God and religion. There is an universal and cordial hatred against sin, and a love to holiness to be found in the heart: and the person is not only turned from sin, but also turned from the world, and the creature, unto the blessed God, as his only suitable and satisfying portion.

I will only mention one text more in

proof of this point, (that in the regenerate soul there is a conformity to the image of God) and that is in the context, *That which is born of the Spirit is spirit:* which plainly signifies, that it is something like that Holy Spirit which is the author of it.—I shall in the last place under this head,

5. Consider the connection there is between Regeneration and other blessings of the Covenant of Grace, such as Justification, Adoption, and Sanctification. There is a certain connection between these things, insomuch that a person that has the one, has the other also: and it is desirable to know what the connection is, or how it stands.—1st. As to justification, that is a relative change, or it is a change in the state of the soul towards God: that is, from a state of guilt and wrath, it is brought into a state of grace, and favour with God: sin is pardoned, and the soul is accepted as righteous before God, in the imputed righteousness of the blessed Mediator.

The connection between justification and regeneration, may be thus stated; in regeneration *that faith* is wrought in the soul, whereby we receive the righteousness of Christ, and so are justified by it.—It is the current doctrine of scripture, that we are justified by faith; by faith in Christ's blood; by faith in his righteousness. That is to say, it is the blood and righteousness of Christ which is the cause or ground of our justification; but faith is the instrument whereby we receive it; or it is the soul's actual reception of it. And as in regeneration this faith is wrought in the soul, therefore there is a connection between regeneration and justification; and such a connection, that except a man be born again, he cannot be justified before God.—Or if we consider faith as the uniting grace, uniting the soul to Jesus Christ, it has the same result. It is by being united to Christ that we have an interest in his righteousness, and are saved from wrath through him. That is a sweet text,

Rom. viii. 1. *There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.* Now it is by regenerating grace, that the Holy Spirit works that faith in the soul whereby it is united to Christ.—2. There is a connection between Regeneration and Adoption.—Adoption is God's taking us into his family; admitting us into the number of his children; and giving us a right and title to all their privileges and blessings. The connection between regeneration and adoption stands thus; that in regeneration, God actually separates us from the world, and sets us apart for himself; he gives us the spirit, temper, and disposition of his children; and at the same time by uniting us to Christ, he gives us in and through him, a right and title to all the privileges and blessings of children. John i. 12, 13. *To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but*

of God. So that whenever a soul is born again, it is at that time taken into the family of God: it is no longer *a stranger and a foreigner, but is a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God.*—And by the new birth, it is fitted for being a child of God. There is a new nature given, which is suitable to this new and excellent relation: there is a filial fear of God, an humble trust and confidence in his mercy through Jesus Christ; and there is a love to him, and a desire to follow him, as becomes his dear children.—3. The connection between Regeneration and Sanctification may be thus expressed: Regeneration is the beginning of spiritual life in the soul; Sanctification is the maintaining, cherishing, and carrying it on towards its designed perfection. Phil. i. 6. *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.* God's beginning the good work refers to regeneration;

his performing it, to sanctification.—The state of regeneration is habitual sanctification; and actual sanctification is the progress of the divine life in the soul, and the person's living in the exercise of grace and the practice of holiness to the glory of God. Agreeably to this, Christ prays for the sanctification of his disciples; John xvii. 17. *Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.* And the apostle prays for believers, *that the God of peace would sanctify them wholly: and that their whole spirit, soul, and body might be preserved blameless, unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.* 1 Thess. v. 23. In regeneration the new creature is born; in sanctification it grows up.- -In regeneration the principles of holiness are infused; in sanctification they are cherished and drawn forth into acts of holy obedience.—In regeneration there is a likeness to Christ begun; in sanctification the soul grows up into a greater conformity to him. 2 Cor. iii. 18. *But we all with open*

face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.—It is the duty of the regenerate soul to be concerned about a spiritual growth, and to use all the means which are appointed of God for that end and purpose. *But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ. Mortify your members which are upon the earth.* And *if ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above; set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth, for ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God.* Hence it appears, that we ought to be very solicitous and careful, to mortify sin, and to live unto God. Whatever there be in our hearts, that is contrary to the mind and will of God, we should seek to have it mortified and subdued. Is there pride? Is there covetousness, which is idolatry? Is there envy, malice, sensuality, or too great a love of the even allowable pleasures of this

world? Is there discontent, impatience, anger, or revenge? These things are not to be indulged: No, not for a moment: but we must seek to have them all mortified, and rooted out by the grace of God.—And more than this, we should be aiming to grow in a likeness to Jesus Christ. For that end and purpose, we should carefully study the life and character of Jesus, as we have it in the sacred history; and endeavour to be like him in all respects, wherein he is imitable by us.—Here is work for thee, Christian. To read the life of Jesus Christ: to read it with care: to observe what was his spirit and temper, what was his conduct and behaviour, at this and the other time, upon this and the other occasion: and all this, with a view to be as like thine adorable Lord Jesus, as ever thou canst.

Having finished what I intended to say on the first head, the NATURE of regeneration; I proceed now to the

II. General head; the NECESSITY of

the new birth. This is laid down by our Lord in as positive and solemn a manner as can be: *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* And does the Lord say this?—Has he given us his word for it, that without the new birth we never can see the kingdom of God? Surely then the matter deserves our closest attention and regard. Think of it, my soul; think of it, my friends: we must be born again, or we cannot see the kingdom of God. *To see the kingdom of God,* is expressive of more happiness than I can describe, or you can conceive of; and *not to see the kingdom of God,* is expressive of the utmost misery.—*To see,* in scripture sometimes signifies *to enjoy.* As in Ps. xxxiv. 12. *What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?* that is, that he may enjoy it; for no man desireth to see good at a distance only, and not to enjoy it. So Heb. xii. 14. *Without holiness no man shall see*

the Lord: that is, he shall not see him to his comfort, or so as to enjoy him; but only to his terror and confusion.—In like manner, when it is said, that the unregenerate shall not see the kingdom of God; the meaning is, they shall not see it to their advantage, comfort, and happiness: they may see it at a distance, but shall never enjoy the glorious blessings and privileges of it.

Let us, then, consider this matter more particularly, both with respect to the kingdom of Grace, and the kingdom of Glory.

I. Without regeneration, a person cannot enjoy the privileges of the kingdom of Grace in this world. I have given you some hints already, about the kingdom of Grace. It signifies Christ's gracious government in and over his church and people: or it denotes a blessed state of gospel privileges, wherein his faithful people are blessed with all spiritual blessings in hea-

venly places. *Christ's Kingdom is not of this world. It is not designed for worldly advantages, for the riches, honours, and pleasures of this world. The Lord does not promise his people these things; but tells them of the cross: *that if any man will come after him, he must deny himself, take up the cross and follow him.* But it is a kingdom for spiritual advantages; for making men holy and happy, and forming them for the everlasting enjoyment of God.

Now it will appear with striking evidence, that, without that holy change of

* This phrase, *the kingdom of God,* or the synonymous one *the kingdom of Heaven,* is not always used in scripture in the same sense precisely, even when it relates to Christ's kingdom in this world. Sometimes it is used for the *visible Church under the gospel dispensation:* and so there is a mixture of good and bad, of tares and wheat in it. Matt. xiii. 38. with verses 47, 48. And sometimes it is used for *Christ's government in and over his faithful people, together with the happiness that is connected with it.* So it is used, Rom. xiv. 17. *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.* See also Matt. vi. 33. Luke xvii. 21. Our text has the phrase in this last sense, and so we have considered it.

mind and character which is implied in the new birth, no child of man is fit for this kingdom, nor can he enjoy the benefits of it, if we consider,

1st. That *Christ will own none for his subjects or people, but such as are born again.*—It is a solemn thought that we have to do with a heart-searching God, who is to be our Judge Eternal; and this we know belongs to the character of Jesus Christ. It is possible to deceive men, but it is impossible to deceive him. He knows my heart and yours perfectly well. And what an awful thing is it, to deceive ourselves and others, with a profession of religion, and at last have our hypocrisy detected, and our real character exposed, before the assembled world of angels and men?—In the book of God we have the laws and rules of Christ's kingdom laid down: and this is is a standing law or rule, that he will approve of none for his subjects but those that are born again. You may see it in the text, and in many other

places; particularly 2 Cor. v. 17. *Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are past away, behold, all things are become new.* And Rom. viii. 9. *Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

2. *Without regeneration, a person is not fit for the services of Christ's kingdom, and cannot perform that obedience which will be pleasing to God.* It is a great matter, not only to perform duty, but to do it in such a manner as may be acceptable to God: to have the heart rightly engaged therein: to serve him from the principles and motives of the gospel; and to aim at his glory in what we do. But, without the new birth, no man is capable of yielding acceptable obedience to God; for these two plain reasons: 1. *Because his heart is bad:* 2. *Because his state is bad.*——*His heart is bad,* and therefore *his services cannot be good.* It is our Lord's doctrine, that the fruit is according to the tree: *that a good tree can*

not bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Matt. vii. 18. An unregenerate man, whatever disguise he may wear, is still carnal; is still in love with sin, and at enmity with God. He is the same man that ever he was, in his heart; and God looks at the heart, more than he does at the service. A little service performed with an honest and good heart, is very acceptable to God; as a cup of cold water, given to a disciple in the name of a disciple: whereas the most splendid service that flows from an unsound heart, will never meet with the Divine acceptance.——Again, *The man's state is bad* before regeneration, and therefore *his services cannot be pleasing to God. By nature we are children of wrath:* and can a child of wrath expect that God should be pleased with his services? Can a guilty sinner reasonably hope that God will accept him, till his sins are pardoned, and God is reconciled to him?——An offended prince may despise

the services of a rebel, that has forfeited his life: so an offended God will despise the services of the man, that was never brought to a reconciliation with himself through Jesus Christ.—In Gen. iv. 4. it is said, *the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering:* first to the man, and then to his offering. So if we would have our offerings accepted, we must see to it that our persons are accepted in the Beloved. A guilty creature cannot come to a holy God without a Mediator. There is no pardon, no peace, and acceptance with God, for us, but through the blood of the Lamb.—And our services, unless they are done in the name of Christ, and with faith in his blood for acceptance, will not be accepted of God.

I will mention but one thing more at present, and that is

3. Regeneration is absolutely necessary to our seeing the kingdom of God in this world, because *without it we have no union or communion with Jesus Christ.*

In regeneration, Christ and the soul are brought together: I mean the soul is united to him by a living faith: and in consequence of this union, it has a blessed communion with him. *Then he is made of God to it, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.* 1 Cor. i. 30. Some persons would count it no better than *enthusiasm* to talk of union and communion with Christ; but it is such enthusiasm as I wish my own soul and yours may have much experience of. The scripture speaks much about this union. It speaks *of Christ's being in us the hope of glory—of his living in us—and of his dwelling in our hearts by faith.* The more fully to show that there is a blessed reality in this union, and a real communication of life and grace from Jesus Christ to all that are united to him; the scripture sets it forth under such similitudes, as are enough to put the matter beyond all doubt. It is compared to the union there is between the vine and the branches: that as the branch

lives in and upon the vine, so the believing soul lives in and upon Christ; and cannot live without him, or separate from him. John xv. 5. *Without me,* (or *apart from me,) ye can do nothing.* When this union is compared to the union between the head and members of the natural body, it is to teach us the same thing; viz. that we can no more live spiritually without Christ, than the members of the body can live when severed from the head. And since the blessed union between Christ and his people is by faith; and that faith is wrought in regeneration: therefore it is a just conclusion, that except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.

I conclude at present with observing, how careful should we be that we do not deceive ourselves with false hopes of salvation. There is too much ground for fearing that many persons are under this self-delusion. Some hope to be saved because they are honest and sober, attend the worship of God, and perform several

external good works: but although these are all good in themselves, persons may go thus far, yet be strangers to the new birth, without which, there is no admission into the kingdom of God. There must of necessity be faith in Christ, sincere repentance, and a life of obedience to God as our chief end. Some hope to be saved, because they love to hear the gospel, frequent sermons, and at times, have their passions much affected under the word: but all this is not sufficient to show that you are born again. You may yet be in love with sin, the heart not be renewed and sanctified, and you have no spiritual vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ. The stony ground hearers are represented as being affected with the word, and *receiving it with joy*, yet *having no root in themselves, they are afterwards offended*, and forsake the Lord. Some hope to be saved, and perhaps are very confident as to their salvation, because they think they have believed in Christ, and are justified by his

righteousness imputed, and this is enough to secure their everlasting salvation. But if people separate faith from holiness, or think to be justified without being sanctified, they dreadfully deceive themselves. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap; he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.* How dangerous and destructive is the delusion of men's thinking to be saved by Christ, when they are living in the practice of sin! It is an eternal truth, that *without holiness, no man shall see the Lord; that if we live after the flesh we shall die, but if we through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body we shall live:* and that *faith without works is dead,* and not saving. Many people mistake the scripture-doctrine of justification by faith alone; imagining that they have got faith and are justified, and that therefore there is no

need for them to trouble themselves about holiness of heart and life. But such persons do not rightly consider that sanctification is an essential blessing of salvation, as well as justification, and that the one is equally necessary with the other. And though faith alone is said to justify, because it depends upon the righteousness of Christ alone for justification, yet (as some have very properly observed) that faith which justifies is not alone, but is always accompanied with repentance, with love to God, and with a sincere desire and endeavour to live to his glory. I mention these things in as plain a manner as I can, because I wish, if possible, to guard you against fatal delusion. *Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith, prove your ownselves; know ye not your ownselves how that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates*, that is, disapproved of God.

SERMON IV.

JOHN III. 3.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

IN my last discourse, I mentioned some things to evince the absolute necessity of regeneration to our salvation: and I intend now, to proceed farther in the same design. I proposed to consider the necessity of it, both with respect to the kingdom of Grace in this world, and also with respect to the kingdom of Glory in that which is to come.

In respect to the kingdom of Grace, I have shewn, that no sinful child of man can ever see it, or enjoy the benefit of it without the new birth; for these reasons:

1st. Because *Christ will own none for his people, but those that are born again.*

2. Because *without the new birth, we cannot perform that service which will be acceptable to God.*

3. Because *without it, we have no union and communion with Jesus Christ.*

I now proceed further to establish the same truth by additional proofs.

4. *Without regeneration* there is *no enjoying the liberty of Christ's kingdom.* —There is a glorious and charming liberty in his kingdom. Not a liberty to sin, but a liberty from it, and for the service of God. To this purpose is that declaration of the apostle, Rom. vi. 18. *Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.* And Rom. viii. 2. *For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*

I am sure that the gospel is no friend to Antinomian principles and practices; and they quite pervert it, who imagine that it is. It establishes the moral law as a rule of life to believers, at the same time that it

directs them to Jesus, as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. *Do we*, says the apostle, *make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law.* Rom. iii. 31. And the same great man says, *I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.* He means, I apprehend, that he was dead to the law, *as a covenant of works:* he did not expect righteousness and life from it; but expected them only from Christ. But he was thus dead to the law, *that he might live unto God;* not that he might live in a lawless and licentious way, but to the glory of God, in a careful observance of his holy law.

The redemption of the Son of God was designed to set his people free from spiritual bondage and misery, that with a holy liberty of soul they might serve their God. It is a redemption from the power of sin and satan; a redemption from the curse of the law, and from the wrath of God: and when this redemption is applied

to the soul, it experiences a freedom *from sin*, and *for serving God*, to which it was before a stranger. The believer is now satiated and disgusted with the service of sin and satan, and he yields himself to God, as one that is alive from the dead. Yes, and he feels the sweet and powerful constraints of redeeming grace. *The love of Christ constrains him.* He admires the Saviour's love in dying for the redemption of sinners; and having some hope that Jesus will save him, he freely gives himself to the Lord; is resolved to follow him, and live to his glory; and thinks that all he can do for Christ, is too little for such love as he has manifested to poor perishing sinners. Now it is in regeneration that redemption begins to be applied to the soul: and therefore without it, there is no enjoying the liberty of Christ's kingdom. The unregenerate are under the power of their spiritual enemies; but the regenerate are *delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom*

of God's dear Son. The Son of God has made them free, and therefore they are free indeed.

Once more, 5. The kingdom of Grace is *a kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy;* but *it is impossible to possess these blessings without the new birth.*—Rom. xiv. 17. *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.* That is, Christ's spiritual kingdom has nothing to do with meats and drinks; making a distinction between them, that some are lawful, and some unlawful, as the law of Moses did: his kingdom is of a more excellent nature; and the blessings of it are solid and substantial blessings for the soul; righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. By righteousness, we may understand a *righteousness imputed* for justification; and a *righteousness imparted* for sanctification. By peace is meant the best of peace: peace with God, peace of conscience, and a sweet peace among our-

selves. And the joy of this kingdom is a joy in the Holy Ghost: not a carnal, worldly joy; but a spiritual, divine, and heavenly joy. It is most excellent *for its author;* most excellent *for its matter;* and most excellent *for its duration*, it will last for ever. But without the new birth there is no possibility of enjoying these blessings. None but the regenerate are possessed of them; and none but they have a true taste and relish for them.

I go on to the second part of my design under this general head, and that is to show you, that without the new birth we can never see *the kingdom of Glory.*

This will appear if we consider only two things:

1. *Without the new birth we have no title to this kingdom.* 2. *We have no meetness for it.*

1. *Without regeneration* a person has *no right or title to the kingdom of Glory.* This kingdom is the inheritance which God has prepared for his children; and it is a

glorious inheritance indeed; *an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.* Yea, it is so great, that the scripture says, *God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.* Heb. xi. 16. The passage intimates, that it is a preparation worthy of God: an inheritance fit for him to bestow; and by which he will make it appear WHAT he can do to make those happy who are the objects of his love.—This inheritance is *eternal life:* it is nothing less than an eternity of happiness, in the vision and enjoyment of God himself. —It is a state of perfect holiness and happiness; perfect peace, rest, and joy. And let me add, that there is eternal life for the body, as well as the soul. Death may part the bodies and souls of believers for a while, but the resurrection will bring them together again. The soul is immediately happy. It goes to paradise, and enters into the joy of the Lord. And there is a time coming, when the dead bodies of the

saints shall live again. Their living Lord and head will fetch them out of their graves; dress them in robes of glory, like unto his own glorious body: and then soul and body will be re-united: and so shall they be for ever with the Lord. But this inheritance is *for children.* None have a right to it, and none will have any interest in it, but the children of God. If *it is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs:* surely it is not meet to take the children's inheritance, and give it to strangers. We must be the children of grace in this world, or we cannot be the inheritors of glory in the world to come.—Now it is by regenerating grace that God makes us his children, that he brings us nigh to himself, and forms us for himself. Or if we regard the apostle's expression, that it is *by faith in Christ Jesus that we are the children of God,* it comes to the same thing; because this faith is of the operation of God, and is wrought in the soul in the new birth. It is through the

blessed Jesus that we have an admission into the family of God: it is by his all-perfect righteousness that we have a freedom from condemnation, and a right and title to heaven's glory. But it is the new birth that unites us to Christ by faith, and therefore without it we have no title to glory.

2. *Without regeneration we are absolutely unfit for heaven;* unfit for *the company*, unfit for *the work*, and unfit for *the enjoyments* of it: and therefore, except a man be born again, he cannot see this kingdom of God.

The company of Heaven is the infinitely glorious God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; glorious angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. Nothing that defileth can enter this region of purity.—Now let me ask you, is an unregenerate person fit for such company as this? He cannot bear the company and conversation of the truly godly now. Whatever he may pretend, he dislikes it in his heart, and

likes the company of vain persons better. And what would he do if he were confined to the company of heaven? It would be a torment to him, and not a pleasure.

Nor would *the work of heaven* be more pleasing to an unregenerate person, than its company. The saints there are perpetually employed in serving God, and celebrating his praises. But how disagreeable would this be to a person that does not love God, and has no taste for religion! It is to him a weariness to serve God now, and that but for a little time together; how then could he bear to be *always*, and *for ever* serving him?—As to the Sabbath-day, he cannot bear to keep it holy, and to spend it in a proper manner: no; this would be tiresome work to him. What a burden and uneasiness then, would an eternal Sabbath be!

The *happiness of heaven* lies in eternal communion with the blessed God. *But what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? What communion hath*

light with darkness? There can be no comfortable fellowship, where there is quite an unsuitableness and disagreement of temper. But in this case, there is a contrariety and enmity in the heart of an unregenerate sinner to the holy God. *His carnal mind is enmity against God.* Instead of choosing him for his portion, and delighting in him as his chief good; he chooses to live estranged from him; and is truly a lover of pleasure, more than a lover of God. With fallen Adam, he shuns the presence of God, and runs away from him. Now with such a temper and disposition as this, what would heaven be to a man? For its happiness he would have no relish, and therefore heaven would not be heaven to him.

But the word of the Lord has put the matter out of all doubt. It expressly declares, that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* That *the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* That *the wicked shall be turned into hell, with*

all the nations that forget God. Oh, how cutting is the thought! To be shut out of the kingdom of Glory! To be for ever separated from the blissful presence of God! And to be companions with devils and damned spirits for ever!—If we do not see the kingdom of Glory, we shall see nothing that is agreeable, from that time forward; but must lie down in everlasting despair and horror. These are awful things to meditate upon; the Lord of his infinite mercy prevent our ever seeing, or knowing them experimentally!

I shall close this discourse with some inferences.

1. From the necessity of the new birth, we may infer that *the nature of man is exceedingly depraved.* The old nature must, surely, have something very bad in it, else what need is there of a new nature? In our first condition there must be something in us very disagreeable to the holy and blessed God; because without a second birth we can never see his kingdom.

I am sensible that the doctrine of original sin is very mortifying to the pride of human nature; and therefore, it is no wonder that it should be disbelieved and opposed by many. But if we attend to the word of the Lord, if we are acquainted with our own hearts, and make our observations on mankind, we shall have striking evidence of the truth of this doctrine. God's holy word leads us up to the *fall of the first Adam*, as the origin of moral evil. It informs us that God made man upright; in his own image, and after his own likeness: but that man, by his wilful disobedience, fell from that state of holiness and happiness, in which he was created: and because Adam acted in a public character, being appointed of God the federal head and representative of all mankind; thence it came to pass that we all sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression. This is the doctrine of the apostle Paul in the fifth chapter of his epistle to the Romans: as ver. 12. *Wherefore, as by*

one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. And ver. 19. *By one man's disobedience many were made sinners:* with more to the same purpose. Much, I know, has been said to evade the force of these texts; and learned men have been criticising upon them with all their might, to give them a sense quite different from that which I bring them for: but all their efforts have been in vain; and these texts carry in them such a clear and full proof of the doctrine of original sin, as is quite satisfactory to my mind; and such as, I am persuaded, can never be overthrown. Certain it is from the divine word, that *death is a penal evil:* it is the *wages, and punishment of sin.* And if *death* be the *punishment of sin,* and it is come upon us *for Adam's sin,* then it certainly follows, that his sin must be imputed to us, and the guilt of it must be upon us. If any should find fault, I might say with the apostle, *Who*

art thou, O man, that repliest against God? He certainly had a right to make Adam a covenant head and representative for all his posterity; and I think the perfections of God may be fully vindicated, as to the covenant he entered into with Adam. But this is not my present object of attention. I leave this doctrine, as it stands, on the express declarations of the word of God.

But in connection with original guilt, there is *original pollution and depravity:* and *this* renders us *vile* in the sight of an holy God. The scripture account of this matter is that, *the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth: that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: that in us, that is in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing: that the carnal mind is enmity against God: that Jews and Gentiles are all under sin. There is none righteous, no not one: there is none that understandeth, none that seeketh after God. They are all gone*

out of the way, they are altogether become unprofitable, there is none that doth good, no not one. Thus it appears with the fullest evidence from the word of the Lord, that there is a deep and universal depravity in the nature of man: and experience and observation abundantly confirm the awful truth. We are naturally lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. It is our natural temper and disposition to be earthly, carnal, sensual; to go astray from God, and to live estranged from him. And hence it is, that there is so great a necessity of regeneration. Our Lord, in his discourse with Nicodemus, lays the necessity of it upon the corruption of human nature; *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* By *flesh* here cannot be meant our natural substance of flesh and blood; but it is something that is opposed to *grace*, or the *new nature* wrought in us by the Spirit of God. Flesh is that which the apostle calls *the old man, which is corrupt according to*

the deceitful lusts. Eph. iv. 22. It is something that is very fruitful of sin and wickedness. Gal. v. 19. *The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings.* The flesh is something which must be mortified, or crucified in us; according to that passage, Gal. v. 24. *They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.* We are *flesh* in our first birth; that is, we are a mass of sin and corruption; and therefore there is an absolute necessity of a new birth, to make us spiritual, and holy. It is owing to men's ignorance of themselves, of the pollution and wickedness of their own hearts, that they are so little sensible of the need they have of being born again. This was the case with Nicodemus in the context; and this was the case with blessed Paul, before his conversion. He thought himself a very good

and respectable man, till the Lord led him to a sight of the spirituality of his law; and the latent sin and venom of his heart. Hear his own account of the matter; Rom. vii. 9. *I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.* And in that same chapter, he bitterly bewails *indwelling sin;* it was his grief and burden.

2. What matter of thankfulness is it, *that the gospel reveals the Lord Jesus Christ as a second Adam, as a head of recovery, and salvation to his people!* By the first Adam's sin, death and condemnation are come upon all his posterity: by the second Adam's righteousness, life and salvation are come to all his spiritual seed. By the first Adam's fall, our nature is awfully vitiated and corrupted: by the second Adam's grace, the polluted hearts of sinners are cleansed, changed, and renewed after the image of God. O, what reason have we to be thankful for such a Saviour as the Lord Jesus Christ is! One that can save us from the guilt and pollu-

tion of sin; from all the miseries of the fall; and that can make us eternally happy! And how solicitous should we be, to be made partakers of Christ, and of the gospel-salvation! This truly is the one thing needful.

3. From the necessity of regeneration we may learn, what ought to be the *great concern of parents with respect to their children;* and that is, that they may be born again. There is an extreme and anxious care which many parents have about the worldly interest of their children, though they have little or none about their souls. They are careful to breed them up, but not to bring them up for God: careful about their living comfortably in this world, but not about their living in the world to come. Oh, cruel parents (for I can call them no better) that neglect the souls of their children, and their eternal salvation! You hear that *except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* And is it a light matter with you, whether your children see the kingdom of God, or

not? Whether their souls be *eternally happy or miserable* in the other world? I confess indeed, that it is not in your power to give them grace: and all your endeavours will not effect the great purpose, without the blessing of God. But remember that a religious education is the means, which the Lord hath often blessed for the regeneration and conversion of souls. And if you attempt it in the fear of God, he may make you the truly happy instruments of conveying spiritual life to the souls of your children. I beseech you then, pity them; teach them (as much as in you lies) the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ: pray for them, and with them; and do all you can to bring them to Christ. It is very awful to think of our dear children's perishing through our neglect. And on the other hand, how pleasing is the thought of God's making us instrumental of their conversion, and eternal salvation. The Lord help us to think of these things, and affect our hearts with them. Amen.

SERMON V.

JOHN III. 3.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

MY business in the present discourse will be to lay before you the scripture marks of regeneration. Seeing that it is a thing of absolute necessity to our present and eternal felicity *to be born again;* surely, we ought to enquire seriously into the matter, whether we are born again, or not. *Examine yourselves,* says the apostle, *whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?* In this examination, we are to bring ourselves to the touchstone of the word, and try ourselves by it. But at the same time, we must

look up to the Holy Spirit of God, that he would guide and help us in this important concern: that so, on the one hand, we may not deceive ourselves with false hopes of salvation; and on the other hand, may have the comfort of our relation to God, if we are indeed his children. May the Lord the Spirit guide me in what I am now to say! The scripture marks of regeneration which I shall mention are these:

1. *Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.* 2. *Prayer.* 3. *An aversion to sin.* 4. *The love and practice of holiness.* 5. *A merciful and kind disposition.* 6. *Victory over the world.* 7. *Longings of soul after a greater likeness to God.*

1. *Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ,* is one scripture mark or evidence of regeneration. It must necessarily be so, because *the new creature is faith which worketh by love.* And the apostle John's words are quite full to this purpose, 1 John, v. 1. *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.* It may be said,

is every one then, that professes himself a Christian, *born of God?* Every one that acknowledges Jesus to be the Messias the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world? I answer, no. Many have professed this, and do profess to believe it, who never knew the grace of God in truth. But doubtless, all that believe it, *according to the scripture account of saving faith;* all that believe it with the heart, and believe it so as to look to Jesus, to trust in him, and are willing to have him for all the great purposes of salvation; all such are born of God. There is a kind of faith which is no proper evidence of regeneration; namely, what our divines have called an historical faith; which is a believing the truth of the gospel concerning Christ, as we do a piece of history, wherein we have little or no concern. But this faith differs from saving faith, in that it does not bring a person to receive Christ, and rest upon him for his own salvation, as saving faith does. Historical faith, I say, leaves the soul at a

distance from Christ; but saving faith brings the soul near, and unites it to him. The true believer, being convinced by the Spirit of God, of his lost condition by nature, and being enlightened to see something of the glory and grace of Christ as a Saviour, comes to him, casts himself upon him, and hopes in him for the salvation of his soul in particular. It does not satisfy him, to hear that Jesus Christ is a Saviour for sinners in general: no, he wants a Saviour for himself: and though perhaps, he has many doubts and fears about his acceptance with Christ, yet he casts himself upon him; resolving that if he perishes he will perish looking to Jesus.

I think some persons have refined too much about the nature of faith, who would make it no more than a passive reception of the truth. I readily grant, there is in it a passive reception of the truth; but this is not all: this does not come up to the scripture account of the subject. According to the scriptures, *faith is a receiving of Christ; a coming to him,*

trusting in him, flying to him for refuge, and laying hold on the hope set before us, &c. Such expressions evidently signify an activity of soul, in applying to Jesus Christ for its own safety and happiness. And since the scripture thus defines it, it is plain we must find in ourselves such actings of soul as correspond with these expressions; otherwise we have no reason to conclude, that we have true saving faith.

It may be proper to observe here, that the first concern an awakened sinner has with Jesus Christ, is about the forgiveness of his sins, and the justification of his person before God. He sees himself a lost creature; exposed to the justice and wrath of God. And what has he now to look to, to give him the hope of pardon and salvation? Not any thing in himself: no. If he looks to himself, he sees matter enough of condemnation: but he can find nothing there sufficient to build his hope of justification upon. At length he is directed to look to the Lord Jesus, to his atoning blood and perfect righteousness

for justification: and when he is enabled to do this by faith, he finds rest and peace to his soul. I think it worthy of a remark here, that faith *as justifying* depends upon nothing else, but Christ's righteousness; but *that faith which is justifying* has business with him for other blessings besides this. Justification is not the whole of our salvation: and, as the gospel reveals the blessed Jesus as a complete Saviour, true faith is willing and desirous to have him for all salvation. Doth the gospel reveal him as the *great prophet* of the church; whose business it is to guide persons in the way everlasting? The believing soul desires to have him as *his prophet*. He sees his own ignorance, and his danger of being misled, if left to himself; and he therefore desires the Lord Jesus would be *wisdom to him* to guide him. Is Jesus Christ the *glorious King of Sion?* The believing soul receives him as *his King*. Not merely by believing that he is a King, but by cordially submitting to his laws and

government; and looking to him to subdue his iniquities for him; to give him victory over his spiritual enemies; and to bring him safe to glory. In short, he is willing to have him *in all his offices*, and to have him *for all salvation;* or as the apostle expresses it, *for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.*

2. Another scripture mark of regeneration is *Prayer:* fervent prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ, or to God in and through him, for the blessings of salvation. The apostle speaks of prayer as well as of faith being in connection with salvation, in Rom. x. 11—13. *For the scripture saith, whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed; for there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him; for whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.* Prayer is the genuine language of faith: I do not mean all that is called prayer or that may appear to be such, but that which persons are ex-

cited to by the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, who is poured out upon them as the spirit of grace and of supplication. When persons are brought to faith in Christ and hope in his mercy for salvation, they begin to pray in a right manner, to call upon the name of the Lord with importunity, because they see their absolute need of saving mercy; and in deep humility of soul they go to him with the language of the publican in our Lord's parable, *God be merciful to me a sinner.*

When persecuting Saul, (afterwards the apostle Paul,) was brought to the knowledge of Christ and faith in him, it is mentioned as an evidence that he was a new man, a regenerate converted man, a Christian. *Behold he prayeth*, Acts ix. 11. This man had been a Pharisee, a great zealot for the Jewish religion, and a most violent opposer of Christianity. Whilst a Pharisee no doubt he had made many prayers, because the Pharisees were of the strictest sect of the Jews; but all these prayers were

of no account with God, and not until now did he pray in a right manner, with faith, with fervency, with humility, as a perishing sinner, who had no hope but in God's mercy through Jesus Christ. Some have called prayer the breath of the new creature, and certain it is, that as soon as ever a man becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus, he breathes forth the desires of his soul after Christ and saving blessings. Whilst a person lives in the neglect of prayer, has no disposition for it, or satisfies himself with cold and formal prayers, this is a sign he is in a state of unregeneracy: he is a stranger to the new birth and has no principle of spiritual life in him. Whereas a person that is born of God will have his desires towards him, and feel the necessity and importance of praying to him, and indeed of praying without ceasing. Prayer is a great privilege as well as duty; it is a method of conversing with him who is the fountain of life, and an appointed means of fetch-

ing down blessings from his gracious hand; so that the way to be rich in grace and consolation, is to be much with God in the exercise of prayer.

3. Another scripture-mark of regeneration is *an aversion to sin:* to sin in general, yea to sin universally. The apostle John speaks to this effect, in his first epistle, iii. 9. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.* And there is another passage to the same purpose in that epistle, 1 John, v. 18. *We know that whosoever is born of God, sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God, keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.* These expressions, of *not committing sin*, and of *sinning not*, cannot reasonably be understood of a sinless perfection, or an absolute freedom from sin: but thus much they certainly signify, that in regeneration there is a new nature given, which is opposite to sin: and therefore

the regenerate soul cannot sin, as others do; cannot sin, so as to love it, or to make a practice of it: and he will not sin at all, so far as the regenerate principle hath influence, and prevails. But *there is not a just man upon earth, that doth good, and sinneth not.* And we know that a child of God may fall sadly, through the lustings of the flesh, and the power of temptation: yet he cannot allow himself in sin; it is against his nature as a regenerate person to do it: and therefore, though he may fall, the new nature (through a continued supply of the Spirit of Christ) will recover itself; and will show itself by a mourning for sin, and an holy indignation against it. David could say, Psal. cxix. 128. *I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.* Whence we see, that it is the temper of a renewed soul *to hate every sin.* Not *some* sins only, because they may be attended with bad consequences in the present world; at the same

time indulging one's self in others, which are not likely to be attended with such consequences. But, the regenerate person abhors and forsakes all sin, because it is displeasing to God, and because it is defiling and hurtful to the soul. He hates sin in his heart, as well as in his life; he hates secret sins, as well as open enormities: yea, the very motions of sin in his heart are grieving to him, and make him cry out with blessed Paul, *O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

I shall here further observe, that true grace will discover itself by an oppposition against those sins, which we have been most addicted to, and by which we have been most frequently overcome. So in Ps. xviii. 23. David speaks of his being upright before God, and of *his keeping himself from his own iniquity:* by which, it is reasonable to think, he meant the sin that did most easily beset him. There are certain sins which may be said to be constitutional: to which we are more addicted,

than to others. As one person, to pride: another, to covetousness: another, to voluptuousness: or another to anger. Now when grace gets possession, it sets the man against *that* sin, or sins, whatever they be. Do not mistake me: I will not tell you that this sin is dead, and that the gracious soul has no farther trouble from it. No; so far from it, that the soul has more difficulty and trouble with it, and from it, than from all other sins besides. But true grace will discover a particular aversion to *that* sin; will watch and pray against it; and will labour in the strength of Christ, entirely to overcome and subdue it.

4. *The love and practice of holiness* is another scripture-mark of regeneration. It is not enough to cease to do evil; but we must also learn to do well. There must be not only a forsaking of sin; but likewise a cleaving to that which is good; a living soberly, righteously, and godly in the present evil world. Let me turn you

again to the first epistle of John: for the leading design of that epistle is to lay down the distinguishing marks of God's children, and therefore it contains much information for our present purpose. 1 John, ii. 3. *Hereby we do know, that we know him, if we keep his commandments.* And ver. 29. *If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doth righteousness is born of him.* The new creature is formed after the image of Christ: and seeing that he was perfectly righteous and holy, every one that is born of him, loves and practises righteousness and holiness, *The true Christian is God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works.* Eph. ii. 10. By renewing grace, *Holiness to the Lord,* is written (as it were) upon the heart; and then its beauties will appear in the life. The regenerate man makes conscience of his duty; of his duty to God, and of his duty to men. He desires and endeavours to live in obedience to all God's command-

ments; and is aiming at the glory of God as the great end of his life.

Not that he expects to be justified by any, or by all, his good works. On the contrary, he is convinced that his own righteousness is infinitely defective. He rejects it as utterly insufficient; and he depends on the perfect righteousness of the Redeemer for justification, and acceptance with God. Nevertheless, true faith worketh by love, and is productive of good works: and this is the best mark of love to Christ, to keep his commandments. John xv. 14. *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.* That man is a sincere friend of the Lord Jesus, that takes his holy gospel for his rule: endeavouring to be conformed to it in heart and life; and that not only *in some,* but *in all respects.*

I will add, it is one great thing which grace does for a man, that *it sets the glory of God uppermost in his heart:* insomuch that he makes it his chief aim and end, that God may be glorified in him,

and by him—Before, he was living to himself; seeking his own ends; and not the glory of God. But now, behold the happy change! He can deny himself for God: he can resolutely deny his own will, when it stands in opposition to the will of God; and his own honour and interest, when they stand in opposition to the honour and interest of God. This is agreeable to that apostolic exhortation; 1 Cor. x. 31. *Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* And the apostle tells us, that the practice of the primitive Christians was correspondent hereunto. Rom. xiv. 7. *For none of us liveth unto himself, and no man dieth to himself, for whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord, whether we live therefore or die we are the Lord's.* Dr. Goodwin says, "the most "eminent property of my conversion to "God was this, that the glory of the "great God was set up in my heart

" as the square and rule of each and
" every particular practice both of faith
" and godliness that I turned to; and of
" all signs of sincerity there can be none
" clearer than this. I remember when I
" heard Dr. Preston describing a true
" spiritual change of heart, upon Rom.
" xii. 2. Be ye transformed by the re-
" newing of your minds, he spake in this
" manner: It is, said he, when upon the
" change of a man's utmost end, there is
" a change made upon the whole man
" and all the powers thereof."

In true godliness, my friends, there is a respect to God, and his glory, above all things else: and it may be said of every regenerate man, that he has such a regard to God and his glory, as no unregenerate man has. The unregenerate, (whatever forms of piety he may put on) is still making self his chief end; but the regenerate is making God his chief end.

5. Another mark of regeneration is *love*

to men; or *a merciful and kind disposition towards them.*

The apostle John has said much upon this. I will not mention all the passages, but only one or two, as instances: 1 John, iv. 20. *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?*—1 John, iii. 17. *But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother hath need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him: How dwelleth the love of God in him?*—How dwelleth the love of God in him? That is, either it is not in him at all; or he does not act in some particular instance as if it were in him. The love of God in the heart, will make a man of a loving, kind, and charitable disposition towards his fellow-creatures. And for a man to pretend to love God, when he is hard-hearted, of a malicious spirit, and not willing to relieve the necessities of his distressed brother, is all

a hypocritical pretence; for *he has not the love of God in him.* Grace makes a man like God and Christ; and therefore it makes him *merciful.* The Christian knows very well, that he is wholly indebted to mercy, the mercy of God in Christ, for all his present enjoyments, and for all his hopes of salvation. He has got, I may say, a sight of mercy; and he has got a taste of mercy. God has visited his soul in mercy; has quickened him when dead in sin; has called him by grace; and has given him a hope that he has forgiven him all trespasses. The consideration of what mercy has done for him, and of what he hopes it will still do for him, inclines and prompts him to be kind and merciful to his fellow-creatures. That is a charming exhortation of the apostle, (the Lord grant that we may feel the force of it upon our spirits!) Col. iii. 12—14. *Put on therefore, (as the elect of God, holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering:*

forbearing one another, and forgiving one another: if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. There is something striking in the character under which he addresses them: *Elect of God, holy and beloved.* For surely, if any in the world are to be *kind and merciful, humble and forgiving,* the elect of God ought to be so: they, whom God hath chosen and saved out of the ruined race of Adam. Hath the Lord God set his love upon you, and manifested the exceeding riches of his grace and mercy towards you? Surely then, you ought to exercise mercy and kindness towards others. Hath the Lord forgiven you all trespasses? Surely then, you should exercise forgiveness towards an offending brother. What are the offences of a fellow-mortal to us, when compared with the offences we have been guilty of against God? Hath he forgiven us *many talents,* and shall not we forgive a fellow-

servant *a few pence?* Matt. xviii. 23. and following verses.

But I must add here, that as true grace will put us upon loving men in general, so it will excite in us *a special love to the Lord's people.* What says the apostle John on this? See 1 John, iii. 14. *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.* Chap. v. 1. *Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.* If we love the father, we shall love the child that bears his image. If we love God, we shall love those that are begotten of him, and that are like him. We are required to love all men; and to do good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of faith. God's people are to be the people of our choice, and delight: and we are to show our love to them, by relieving and helping them in their necessities, and by all other means, as the Lord gives us opportunity and ability.

6. *Victory over the world,* is another

scripture mark of regeneration. 1 John, v. 4, 5. *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* Here then the question is, Have we got any victory over the world? Is the love of the world as much in our hearts as ever, or is it not? It is natural for us to love the world more than God; but it is by supernatural grace that we love God more than the world. What, then, is the case with us? Have we renounced the world as quite insufficient to make us happy? and have we chosen the blessed God for a portion? Do we prefer Christ and his salvation, to all the world?—Here let us enquire, What is it, that we are chiefly concerned about for ourselves, and our children? Is it, to have God and heaven? or to have the world and the things thereof? *Where the treasure is*, says our Lord, *there the heart will be.* If the treasure

be on earth; then our chief care for ourselves and children will be, to get and secure this treasure: but if the treasure be in Heaven, then we shall be supremely solicitous that ourselves and our children may enjoy the blessedness of heaven, and a holy suitableness for it. We have a great instance of faith's victory over the world in Moses. Heb. xi. 24, 25, 26. *By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter: choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.*

Many would have called Moses's choice a very foolish one, but it was truly the best choice he could have made. He wished to have his lot and portion among the people of God, that he might share with them in the eternal blessedness of

Heaven: and therefore he willingly gave up all his great prospects in the land of Egypt, and suffered reproach and affliction with God's people here, that he might live with them hereafter.

7. Another mark of regeneration is to have *ardent desires of soul after a greater likeness to God.* The new creature in its first production, and indeed all the time of our continuance in this world, is in a state of imperfection. Though there be a prevalent likeness to God, there is also some unlikeness: but the gracious soul is grieved for its imperfections; is dissatisfied with its unlikeness to the blessed God, and is not without real desires, and at times earnest longings of soul, after a greater likeness to him. You may see this in blessed Paul. Perceiving in himself, *that he had not attained, and that he was not as yet perfect;* he tells us, *this one thing he did, forgetting things behind, and reaching forth to things before, he press-*

ed forward toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Phil. iii. 12. and following verses. Well then, how is it with us? Do we see imperfections in ourselves? And are our souls pressing after perfection, after a greater conformity to God in holiness. Do we lament it in secret before God, that there is so much sin in us? So much that is contrary to his holy will? And do we pray and strive (with some degree of seriousness and earnestness) to be more conformed to his glorious image! If so, this is a good sign that we are born of God.

Thus I have set before you several scripture-marks of regeneration. We are to remember, that they are *scripture-marks;* and therefore, if we take any thing for the new birth that does not answer these marks,-we mistake the point, and are deceiving ourselves with vain hopes of salvation. Let us therefore examine ourselves by the word of the Lord; and

may his Holy Spirit help us in this important inquiry!

I shall close at present with one reflection, and that is, that *the doctrine of salvation by grace does not open a door to licentiousness, or give any encouragement to men to live in sin.* No, by no means. Salvation (in the scripture-sense of the word) is a salvation from sin, as well as from the wrath to come. It is a salvation from the *guilt of sin,* by justifying grace; and a salvation from the *filth of sin,* by renewing and sanctifying grace: and therefore it is a downright contradiction to suppose, that a person is saved (in the scripture-sense) who yet goes on in the indulgence and love of sin. It is precious news to perishing sinners, to hear that salvation is of grace; of grace absolutely free; because it gives them encouragement to hope for salvation, when they see themselves exceedingly vile and guilty; and find themselves poor, weak,

helpless creatures. But if a sinner be saved by the grace of God, *he is born again, made a new creature in Christ Jesus Old things are past away, behold all things are become new.* I close with the important words of the apostle, Tit. iii. 5. *Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.*

SERMON VI.

JOHN III. 3.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

I INTEND now to finish my discourses on this subject with a serious exhortation.—You have been hearing that the new birth is absolutely necessary; and that we are undone for ever without it. O that this doctrine may sink deep into our hearts, and be a means in the hand of the Divine Spirit of awakening the sinner, and quickening the saint! It is possible, that some in this assembly may be inwardly convinced, that they are not born again; the temper of their hearts is still earthly and sensual; they are strangers to faith in Christ, repentance for sin, and love to God and men. If so, the text has something in it very awak-

ening to you; and that is, that if you die in your present condition, you must be shut out from the kingdom of God. And can you be easy in such a condition? Can you bear the thought of being for ever excluded the kingdom of God? I beseech you not to treat this matter with neglect; for it is your life. *Knowing the terrors of the Lord, I would fain persuade you:* and may my blessed Master give me success!

1. *Attend seriously to the impressions made upon your hearts.* It is often the case, that when persons have been somewhat impressed with the importance of divine and eternal things, they relapse into the world, and think no more of these great subjects. But O let not the impressions be thus obliterated! Entertain serious thoughts of the misery you must inevitably endure, if you die in an unregenerate state: and beg of God that convictions may end in conversion.

I am sensible that such thoughts are unwelcome to carnal men; they do not like

to think seriously about their souls and another world; and if under the preaching of the word, or by some awakening providence, their minds are somewhat impressed, and serious thoughts force themselves upon them, they do not chuse to entertain them, but commonly endeavour to get rid of them as fast as they can. But is this their wisdom? No, indeed, it is their great folly. They have immortal souls in a state of sin, and in danger of perishing for ever; and they are expressly told by him who is truth itself, that *except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God;* yet they do not chuse to trouble themselves about this matter, or inquire seriously what they must do to be saved. If their bodies were under some dangerous disease, they would act very differently, keeping their danger in mind whilst there was hope of a cure: surely then, when the soul is in danger of perishing, which is of far greater worth than the body, it is incumbent on persons to think of their danger and to

seek after salvation before it be too late. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Now is the time to seek after an interest in Jesus Christ and the blessings of that salvation which is to be found in him. It is of infinite importance to have regenerating grace to bring us to a blessed union with Jesus Christ; because otherwise the door of heaven will be shut against us; and if the door be shut, the awful consequence must be, that we shall be sent to hell, and be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power.

2. *Remember that it is the work of God to make you new creatures.* Some have got a notion that they can repent, and believe, and turn to God at any time; and so they put off this great work from time to time; depending upon themselves, and their own free will, to do it some time or other. But the very practice of these persons confutes their notion. If they have such a free will as they imagine, why do

they not turn to God immediately? Is there any thing of equal necessity and importance with this? Surely, not. And does not God call upon men, to do it instantly? *To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. A To-morrow* we cannot boast of; for we know not what a day may bring forth. The present moment is all that we can call our own. And considering the great uncertainty of life, and the vast importance of eternal things, men can have no business to mind which deserves their immediate regard, so much as the things that belong to their souls' peace. The truth is, these persons have not that free will to good which they imagine they have. They have no heart, no will, to turn to God; and therefore they live in a course of perpetual delays. Know then this great truth, that your hearts are very corrupt and wicked; that it is God's work to change them; and that you have no power or strength to do it of yourselves.

Yet 3. *Be not discouraged because it*

is the work of God: for he that hath quickened many that were dead in trespasses and sins, is able to quicken you. And seeing that salvation is entirely of free and sovereign grace, there is encouragement to hope, that God may save you as well as another sinner.—Yes, you may be *assured* of it; if you truly seek this great salvation in the way which Divine Authority and Mercy have prescribed. When a person is awakened to a serious concern about his salvation, it is often the case that severe temptations greatly distress and discourage the soul: and it is the duty of God's ministers to endeavour to remove such stumbling-blocks out of the way; and to administer comfort to the discouraged soul. I know that all we can do is nothing, and will be nothing, without the blessing of God. But it is to be considered, that God works by means; and we do not know, but whilst we are speaking to the ear, he may speak to the heart. Therefore, we are to exhort men to repent,

and believe, and return to God by Jesus Christ. And when we meet with persons that are awakened and distressed, we are to set before them the encouragements of the gospel, in hopes that the Lord may bless what may be spoken.

Sometimes Satan, and an unbelieving heart, will tell the awakened sinner, "That "he is too bad ever to think of being "saved. Nobody has got such a wicked "heart as he has. And he has gone on "so long in rebellion against God, that he "has no room to think that God will ever "do any thing for him as to his salvation." To counteract this temptation, look into the Divine word, and see what great examples of mercy are there recorded. Manasseh, for instance, was a stout-hearted rebellious sinner. He set himself, as it were, to fight against the God of Israel; and to promote the worship of idols in opposition to him. And he was a cruel tyrant, a monster of a man, *who shed innocent blood very much, until he had filled*

Jerusalem with it, from one end to another. There were other things bad in his character besides these: and it was no small aggravation of his wickedness that he was the son of a good man, the good king Hezekiah. Yet divine grace at length reached the heart of this vile sinner; insomuch that he became an humble, penitent, praying, godly man. The sacred history says, that *when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers; and prayed unto him, and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God.* 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13. O surprising grace! To renew, pardon, and save a person that had run such lengths in sin and wickedness as Manasseh had! *But God's ways* of mercy *are not as our ways.* And canst thou, soul, think of mercy extended to such a wretch as Manasseh, and then say there is

no hope of mercy for thee! I might tell thee here of the blaspheming and persecuting Saul; of the Corinthian sinners, who were fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, and almost every thing that was bad; and of the Jews, who were guilty of murdering the Son of God. Such as these have obtained mercy, and been saved by the power and grace of the Lord our God: and therefore say not that there is no hope of mercy for thee.

But perhaps the devil would persuade the sinner *that he is not elected;* and therefore it is in vain for him ever to think of being saved.—Does the devil tell thee thou art not elected? How does he know that? It is impossible for him to know that thou art not elected of God. This is a secret locked up in Jehovah's breast: and as the scripture says, *secret things belong to God, but revealed things to us and our children.* It is not for thee to inquire *at this time,* whether thou art elected or not; but to consider whether there is any en-

couragement from the revealed will of God, for thee to hope that he will have mercy upon thee, and save thy soul. Does he exclude thee any where from the hope of mercy? or does he not invite thee, as well as others, to return to him, with the gracious promise that he will have mercy upon thee, and abundantly pardon thee! And as to this blessing of regeneration, God has promised it in his word, in a free and indefinite manner. Ezek. xxxvi. 26. *A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you.* Now then, if God give any poor sinner to see his need of this grace, here is a precious promise to encourage him to hope that the Lord will bestow it. It is a free, absolute, indefinite promise. It is for the encouragement of thee, as well as any other person. Dost thou see thy need of the mercy promised? The

promise is open for thee, free for thee to lay hold upon it. Go then, carry it to the throne of grace, and plead it with God as his own word of promise: and fear not, the Lord will not turn thee away, without the mercy promised.

But perhaps the devil may tempt thee to think *it is too late now*. To which I answer, the thief upon the cross found mercy at the last hour, and therefore who can say it is too late for thee? God doth not tell thee, it is too late for thee to repent, and be converted: therefore do not hearken to what the devil may say as to this matter.

But it is possible the discouraged soul may be afraid that God himself says, *it is too late*. "I fear," says he, "that it is "so, and that passage seems to forbid my "entertaining any hope." Prov. i. 24, and following verses. *Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and*

would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh. I answer; It appears to me, that the design of this place is to show, what a sad condition impenitent sinners will be in at last, who reject the counsel of God against themselves. God calls, warns, invites, &c. but they regard him not: and at last he will treat them with as much neglect and contempt, as they have treated him with. But it may be concluded from the whole tenor of God's revelation, that there is nothing here to discourage a poor soul from returning to God, who is alarmed with a sense of his danger. If persons indeed continue impenitent to the last, and die in that condition, then it will be too late for them to cry for mercy, and God will not pity, nor spare them. But if thou art an awakened sinner, under serious thoughts about returning to God, He invites thee to do so. He does not say in his word, that it is too late, but assures thee that *he de-*

lighteth not in the death of a sinner: therefore do not let the devil persuade thee, to draw the sad conclusion against thyself, that it is too late for thee.—This leads me to the last thing I have to say here, by way of advice to sinners, viz.

4. *Attend to the encouragements of the gospel, to come to Jesus Christ, for life and salvation.* The gospel is a revelation of grace and mercy, and as such it suits thy case. Dost thou not need mercy to pardon thee, and grace to help thee? Well, there is mercy and grace in Jesus Christ for miserable sinners; and they are invited to come, and take it freely. *Whoever will, let him come, and take the waters of life freely.*

We are told that *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;* and therefore, it is the duty of men to attend to the word, and to the encouragements it gives them to come to Christ for salvation.

Here then consider, *that Jesus Christ*

is the gift of Divine love. God has freely given him for the redemption of sinners: and this is the record or testimony of the gospel, *that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* We do not rightly enter into the spirit and glory of the gospel, unless we consider Jesus Christ *as a given Saviour*; and that he is held out as the free gift of God, for poor sinners to come, and take him as such. Consider farther, that *He died for sinners; for the ungodly; for such as by nature and practice are enemies unto God.* Therefore do not stand off, because of your unworthiness or vileness; but rather let a sense of it drive you to the blessed Saviour. *It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners:* and is it not worthy of thy acceptation then? Did he come to save sinners? And what, because thou art a sinner, a great sinner, therefore he is not a Saviour for thee! Do not entertain such a dis-

honourable thought concerning the gracious Redeemer. *He is mighty to save: and able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*

But now I have a word of exhortation to the saints of God, who have experienced his renewing grace.—And I would say, 1st. *Think what the mercy of God has done for your souls.* You may say with the apostle, *God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.* Eph. ii. 4, 5. Have you reason to hope that your souls have been divinely quickened? That you have been called into fellowship with the Son of God; and have been raised from the death of sin, to a life of righteousness and holiness? O that your hearts may be suitably affected with this mercy of God to you! He has done more for you, than if he had given you all this

world. No words can express, nor thoughts conceive, the greatness of his mercy to you. Think of the *freeness of this mercy. It is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he hath saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.* Tit. iii. 5. Think again, *how distinguishing* this mercy of God to you is: that, when so many are left in the gall of bitterness, and bonds of iniquity, and you as unworthy as they, the Lord should have mercy upon you, and renew you by his grace! And consider further, that the mercy God has shown you is the *beginning of eternal life* in you; and will certainly issue in it: for as the blessed Saviour says, John iv. 14. *The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.* And Phil. i. 6. *Being confident of this very thing, that he, which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus*

Christ. Has God taken you, and made you *his children* by regeneration, and adoption? O the safety and happiness of your condition! He will be a *Father* to you; *the best of fathers.* He will guide you by his word and Spirit: will help you in all your conflicts with your spiritual enemies; and will so strengthen and defend you, that you shall be victorious at last. He will support you under afflictions, and make all things work together for your good. He will bless ordinances, and bless providences to you; and never leave you until he has done all that for you which he has spoken to you of. This God will be your God for ever and ever, and he will be your guide even unto death. Well then, what a call is here upon you to love the Lord! to be thankful to him, and to bless and praise his holy name!

2. *Rest not in present attainments, but seek after a spiritual growth; a growth in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* 2 Pet.

iii. 18. *As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.* 1 Pet. ii. 2, 3. Have we reason to hope, that the Lord has called us by his grace, and made us his people? We are not to sit down contented with this; but should remember that we are called to service and action; to live to God; and to press forwards towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. They are in an awful mistake, who suppose the life of a Christian to be an idle life. It is a busy life indeed: and there is no living it as we should do, without much watchfulness, much prayer, much holy diligence and circumspection in our walking with God. Consider, Christians, that you have enemies to fight with; corruptions to mortify; the world to overcome; and satan to resist, who will do all he can to hinder you in your spiritual course, and to turn you out of the way. The Christian

life is *a continual warfare:* as the apostle says, *we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* For which reason we had need *to put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.* Eph. vi. 12, 13. Do we want to know what this armour is? The apostle enters into the particulars of it in that chapter: and the matter deserves our very close and serious attention; that we may know what it is, and have it for use.

Or, if we consider the Christian life under another notion, that *of a race;* then we are called *to lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us; and to run with patience the race that is set before us; looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.* Heb. xii. 1, 2. Here then I would say, in the words of our blessed Lord

himself, *watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.* The Christian has much need to watch his own heart; and to watch his words and actions, that he may not sin against God. Satan is watching to ruin us; ought we not then to be watching for our salvation? And considering the danger we are in; the power of our enemies; and our own weakness and insufficiency; we have need to be much in prayer to God, that he would keep us continually. Every day we should be committing ourselves to his grace and protection. *Hold me up and I shall be safe. Lord, keep me, and then I shall be well kept.*

Moreover, *be looking to the death of Christ* for the destruction of sin in you: *that the old man may be crucified with Christ; that the body of sin may be destroyed; that henceforth ye may not serve sin.* Be often turning your thoughts to the Saviour's cross, and that with a view to keep up a proper sense of the evil of sin. "What did it cost the blessed Jesus

" (should the believer say) to procure my " redemption from sin? How did it make " him sweat blood in the garden; and pour " out his soul unto death upon the cross? " And what! shall I entertain that evil, " that abominable thing, which was the " cause of all his sorrows? God forbid!" Nothing shows so much the evil of sin, as the bitter passion of the Son of God. And nothing is more likely to make the believer afraid of sin; to preserve him from it, and to arouse his utmost efforts against it, than frequent meditations on the death of his Saviour.

To this, I will add, that we are to labour to grow in every grace, and to live in the exercise of it. For this end and purpose, we should be looking to the exalted Jesus; that we may have a constant supply of his Holy Spirit; and may feel the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death. *Jesus died for sin;* and we should be looking to his death, that

in the virtue of it, we may die *unto* sin. *Jesus rose again from the dead,* to be a living and life-giving head to his church and people; we should therefore be looking to him for all needed grace; that we may walk before God in newness of life. Receive that charge of the apostle, and try to put it in practice: 2 Pet. i. 5—8. *And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

3. *Be careful that your lives and conversation may witness for you, that you are the children of God.* Do you profess to be his children? Let it be seen that you are like God; like him in righteousness and holiness, in truth and faithfulness, in good-

ness and mercy. Be just and honest in all your dealings; be faithful to your promises; be humble, kind, and charitable, ready to do good to all men, but especially to them that are of the household of faith. In a word, *Let your conversation be, as becometh the gospel of Christ: be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, amongst whom ye shine* (or shine ye) *as lights in the world: holding forth the word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.* Phil. ii. 15, 16.

4. *Be often thinking of that world, and looking towards it, where grace shall be consummated in eternal glory. Behold,* says the apostle John, *what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shal*

appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 1 John, iii. 1, 2. It is a great dignity and happiness to be the children of God now; but no mortal can express or conceive what is the happiness designed for them *in another world, God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.* Considering how poor and afflicted, how mean and despised many of them are in this world; it may seem, as if it would be a shame for God to own them: but could we see them, when drest in their robes of glory, and in possession of the heavenly inheritance; then it would appear to our full conviction, that there is no reason why God should be ashamed to be called their God. O, what a great and blessed thing is the hope of the gospel, the hope of eternal life! Labour, Christians, to live under the power of it; and to feel the comfort of it in your souls. Be often thinking of the coming of the Lord, and comfort yourselves with this thought, that it will not

be long before all your struggles with sin and satan will be at an end; and before your souls, which are now breathing after God, shall enjoy a perfect and everlasting rest in him.

I cannot dismiss this momentous subject, without saying a word or two *to my young friends.* You have been hearing about the new birth; *the necessity and importance of it*, and what do you think of these things? What effect have they had upon you? The Lord grant that they may have an happy effect! As to some of you, I bless God, I am not without hopes, that you have been born again. But there are others of you, that I fear will think it too soon to trouble yourselves about these things. But consider, my dear young friends; I beseech you consider, that *it may not be too soon for you to die.* The pale messenger death, has sometimes been sent to fetch away as young as you are: you do not know but he may soon come, and stop your breath, and hurry you away

into the eternal world: and if you die without Christ, and grace, you are undone for ever. Consider then, *what a mercy it is to be in Christ betimes*, and to experience the renewing grace of God. The time of youth is a dangerous time. Passions are strong. The world is courting you with its smiles, and vanities. The devil is tempting, doing all he can to keep you from God and religion; and to secure the possession of your hearts for himself. And how melancholy is it to see young people caught in the snare of the devil; running after lying vanities, and forsaking their own mercies! But if the heart be established with grace, much sin and mischief will thereby be prevented. Then also you will have God to be the guide of your youth; and he will lead you in the way everlasting; in the way of faith, holiness, and comfort, towards a state of everlasting peace and joy. Is it *too soon* (think you) to get from under the curse of the law, and from under the power of sin

and satan? *Too soon* to have on interest in the blessed Jesus? To be pardoned, sanctified, and adopted into the family of God? Surely not, the sooner this is your case, the better. Besides, if you are converted to God *soon*, think what an opportunity you will have to serve and glorify him, if he is pleased to spare you any length of time in this world: and whenever he is pleased to call you hence, you will be prepared for death, and will sweetly sleep in Jesus.

Consider farther, *how graciously the blessed Redeemer invites you to come to him.* He says, *My son, give me thy heart. I love them that love me; and they that seek me early shall find me.* And shall the merciful Redeemer, the compassionate Friend of souls, thus invite you to come, and will you neglect, and refuse him? Does he invite you to come to him for life, and salvation? And will you not come to him, that you may have life!

I wish you to consider farther, the great

advantage of early piety. Religion is the one thing needful; nothing is so necessary and important as this, therefore, the sooner you become acquainted with it and mind it in earnest, the happier you will be. As I before observed, the time of youth is a dangerous time, because the passions are often too strong for reason, the world is courting you with its vanities, and there are many evil examples about you; yea some persons that will do all they can to draw you aside from the right way of the Lord. How desirable, therefore, is it that the heart be established with grace in early life! Many, by the sins of their youth, have not only laid a foundation for much remorse and painful reflection, but also for much misery in other respects, through the remaining part of life. Now think, what a mercy it will be to have all this mischief prevented! besides which, the sooner you embrace religion, the sooner you will enjoy its pleasures and comforts. *Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.* The plea-

sures of communion with God, of doing his will, and of peace of conscience, are unutterably superior to all the pleasures of sense and sin. Those exalted and holy delights are adapted to the nature, and suited to the dignity of an immortal soul. Carnal people look upon religion as an unprofitable thing, and are practically saying, *What is the Almighty that we should serve him? And what profit should we have if we pray unto him?* They are greatly mistaken in this matter; are woefully blinded with prejudice; for, in reality, religion is the most profitable thing in the world; as the apostle says, *Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.* Can any thing be so conducive to your happiness as the promise of God, that he will give you grace here, and glory hereafter, and will withhold from you nothing that is good?

And in the last place, consider *that the token of God's covenant has been applied*

to you in baptism. Your pious parents rejoice in the covenant of God for themselves, as a covenant of free grace and mercy, of peace and salvation. They rejoice in it that there are promises respecting their seed; that God will be *a God to them, and their seed after them. That he will pour his Spirit upon their seed, and his blessing upon their offspring, &c.* They have given you up to the Lord their God, in the holy ordinance of baptism; because formerly the token of God's covenant was applied to the infant-seed of his people; and this ancient grant of privilege is not revoked by the New Testament; but Jesus himself has expressed a love to little children; and has declared them to be some of the visible subjects of his kingdom; saying, *of such is the kingdom of heaven.* And will you despise the covenant of God, which is a precious covenant of grace and mercy, of life and salvation for perishing sinners? You are under peculiar obligations to take the Lord for

your God. And you have special encouragement too, because he is the God of your fathers; and has promised to be the God of their seed after them. The Lord have mercy on you, and incline your hearts to come to him! The Lord make you his children, that you may be found of the happy number of *his*, in that day when he shall make up his jewels! *Amen.*

FINIS.

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GRACE:

THE TRUTH AND GROWTH

AND

DIFFERENT DEGREES THEREOF:

BEING THE SUM AND SUBSTANCE OF

SIXTEEN SERMONS,

Preached by that Faithful and Painful Servant of Jesus Christ,

CHRISTOPHER LOVE, M. A.

FORMERLY MINISTER OF LAWRENCE JEWRY, LONDON:

THESE BEING HIS LAST SERMONS.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

SEVEN LETTERS

TO AND FROM HIM WHILE IN PRISON;

WITH

A SKETCH OF HIS LIFE,

AND

HIS PREDICTIONS.

BY E. DAVIES, OF IPSWICH.

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PREFACE

BY THE FIRST EDITORS.

To the Christian Reader,

Our purpose in publishing this small Treatise, is not to make old sores bleed, or foment any one's discontent, or renew any one's grief, concerning the much lamented death of this godly and reverend Author; nor shall we mention what great loss the Church of God had in the death of so useful and hopeful a minister; but we shall, in a few words, acquaint thee why this little is thus made public.

There are many imperfect Copies of Mr. Love's Sermons, which are likely to be obtruded into the world, by some who regard no other end in publishing and printing books, than their own private gain; to prevent which, we have, from his own Notes, published these Sermons; and shall desire the Reader to take notice, that whatever Sermons of this Author shall be thought fit to be published, shall be attested with some of our hands who are intrusted with his Papers; and hope none will be so injurious to the Author and others, as to presume to print any thing of Mr. Love's without such attestation. Thou hast here but the marrow and substance of the last Sermons preached by that late servant of God.

Pulpit repetitions and enlargements are here omitted,—we having endeavoured to accommodate thee both in the *price* in buying, and in thy *pains* in reading, that thou mightest have much *fruit*,

though there be not many leaves. Those books are best that have much worth and weight in a little bulk;—and such is this, if we mistake not.

The reverend Author, though he had not attained many years, yet he had gotten much experience about soul affairs. These were his last Meditations, and, therefore, the more desired by, and we hope will be the more acceptable to those to whose souls his ministry was profitable and precious. Thou wilt find here no new, uncouth, and unscriptural expressions, — but plain, practicable doctrine, old divinity, sound, solid, and conscience-searching truths; the gracious Author preaching and pressing them on the hearts of his hearers, from his own experience of them. Neither wilt thou meet with any railings or reproachings of the public and present governors,—the usual, though the most unjust, charge against Presbyterian Ministers.

This whole discourse is not about *state*, but *soul-affairs*; which is another reason why it is published to check the licentiousness of this age, which hath surfeited upon absurd and unprofitable pamphlets.

The Lord give thee to have thy spiritual senses exercised, to discern both good and evil; but, alas! what between state-mutations and church-dissentions, spiritual truths lie by neglected. It is much to be feared that the work of grace goes on but slowly; few inquire into their soul-state; — but to inquire into our spiritual state is the best husbandry in the world. If we are to be *diligent to know the state of our flocks*,—then, surely, we should give all diligence to know how it is with our precious and immortal souls. The benefit and profit of this soul-searching, will abundantly recompence our pains and care in performing it.

There are two great mistakes, to which the best of Christians are very subject: — First, Either to despise and disparage the work of grace, if their measure be small. Secondly, Or else, if their at-

tainments be somewhat considerable, to sit down contented with their acquired measures.

We beseech you take heed of both these evils, which are both alike, unthankfulness to God, and injurious to your own souls; the one despiseth the truth, the other neglects the growth of grace. — 1. If thou art one of the tender plants in Christ's orchard, a weak lamb in his flock, a babe in his family, yet despise not the day of small things in thy soul; though thy gifts be few, and thy comforts fewer, yet tread not out thyself the smoking flax; stay thyself upon his name who is the Rock of ages, and whose work is perfect, and his grace unchangeable, who will bring forth judgment unto victory; — slight not the least measure of grace, though the first and ruder draught be but drawn on thy soul; yet, be comforted in this, that the image of Christ is begun to be renewed there; but, be sure thy grace be right. Temporary faith, partial obedience, mercenary love, pretended zeal, legal sorrow, feigned humility, make up a lifeless picture of a professor who hath the form of godliness without the power of it; but, it is true grace that makes a true Christian. Common gifts and graces may bring a man near Heaven, but they will never bring a man into Heaven. This treatise, therefore, will teach thee to bring thy grace to the true touch-stone. It is one of the saddest considerations that can settle on the heart of a Christian, to think how a formal hypocrite may go towards Heaven with his seeming grace; and how low a true child of God may fall by sin towards Hell, and yet have real grace! It is a dreadful thing to think how many professors in our age rest in duties performed and parts acquired, and never examine themselves whether they are in the faith, and have attained that true grace which reprobates and hypocrites can never have! When we find in Scripture, Cain sacrificing, — Pharaoh confessing his sin, — Ahab fasting, — Saul weeping, — Jehu

reforming, — Judas repenting and restoring, — Simon Magus believing, — Herod rejoicing, — and Felix trembling at the word, and yet not one of these had one dram of grace, — how careful should we be then to examine and prove ourselves, whether we are are in a state of grace! O, it is very sad to fall short of them that fall short of Heaven! As for the most part of professors of our times, it is much to be feared, that their spiritual trading lies more for the increase of gifts and parts (in which their religion consists) than for grace, which is the true reason why we have so little truth and peace amongst us; for parts puff up the mind, pride begets contention, and contention increaseth error. Former times had less gifts, but more grace; less knowledge and more conscience.

2. If thou art one of those that, upon good Scripture grounds, canst say Thou hast the truth of grace, labour then after growth in grace,—Oh! labour, that whilst others are joining house to house, and laying field to field, till they be placed alone in the midst of the earth, that you give all diligence to add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity, that these graces may be in you and abound; that you may neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. No Christian should content himself with any measures of grace attained, for he is like to make use of all the grace he hath, had he a Benjamin's portion. The time is coming, when one dram of true grace will be of more worth than all the world. The comforts of grace, *the joy and peace in believing*, will be cordials to you when you are dying, and will set up such a light in the soul, as the shadow of death shall neither damp nor darken; but, alas! most men are labouring more after wealth than faith,

more after greatness in the world than true grace; of whom when they die it may be said, *They had goods laid up for many years*; — but it cannot be said, *In them was found some good thing towards the Lord.* Men do usually lay up riches for a dear year, they will say, they know not what need they may have before they come to die. Be ye then as wise and provident for your precious souls: your temptations and trials may be such, that you may have use for all your faith and patience.

"Eat," said the angel to Elijah, "for the journey is long. It is no short way to Heaven, nor is the opposition small thou shalt meet withal in thy passage thither." O then, get thy soul well stored with spiritual provision of grace, and the comforts of it. It is true thy safety is in the being, but thy comforts stand in the strength and activity of thy graces. Weak grace is saving, but strong grace is comfortable; truth of grace shall be rewarded with Heaven; growth of grace doth, as it were, anticipate Heaven. The least true grace will bring thee to Heaven; but the more grace thou hast, the fitter for and surer thou wilt be of Heaven. The Lord make these, and all the labours of his servants, profitable to his church! Ye, therefore, beloved, seeing that ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness; — but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever! Amen.

Reader, we remain,

to serve thee in thy soul-affairs,

EDMUND CALAMY,
SIMEON ASHE,
JEREMIAH WHITAKER,
WILLIAM TAYLOR.

London,
Feb. 13th, 1651, 2.

LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

THE following sixteen sermons, were preached only a few months before the preacher himself was beheaded. The reader may wish to have before him the principal circumstances of that distressing event, with the account of the publication of the sermons after his decease. The former we have, with other circumstances of Mr. Love's life, in Neal's History of the Puritans, with Toulmin's Notes, v. 4, p. 45; and the latter, in the Epistle to the Reader, originally annexed to the Sermons.

I. Of the Author.

The reverend Christopher Love was born at Cardiff, in Glamorganshire; who became a servitor of New Inn, Oxford, 1635, aged 17; and in 1642 proceeded to master of arts. He was, at the beginning of his ministry, preacher to the garrison of Windsor, then under the command of Colonel John Venn; and afterwards successively minister of St. Ann's, near Aldersgate, and St. Lawrence Jewry, in London. He was the author of sermons, and some pieces of practical divinity, which gained him a considerable reputation.

After Charles the Second had treacherously sworn to the *solemn league and covenant*, and had been crowned King in Scotland, many persons were apprehended in London by the Commonwealth, for holding private correspondence with the Scots. The ministers who were apprehended, were Dr. Drake, Mr. Jenkins, Jackson, Robinson, Watson, Blackmore, and Haviland; who, after some time, were released on their petition for mercy, and promising submission to the government for the future; but Mr. Love and Gibbons were made examples, as a terror to others. The Reverend Mr. Love was

brought before a new *High Court of Justice*, erected for this purpose, as was the custom of those times for *state criminals*. The Rev. Mr. Jackson was summoned; but refused to be sworn or give evidence, because he looked on Mr. Love to be a good man; saying, he should have a Hell in his conscience to his dying day, if he should speak any thing that should be circumstantially prejudicial to Mr. Love's life. The court put him in mind of his obligation to the public, and that the very safety of all government depended upon it; but he refused to be sworn, for which the court sent him to the Fleet, and fined him five hundred pounds. By other witnesses, it appeared that Mr. Love had carried on a criminal correspondence both with the King and the Scots.

Mr. Love called no witnesses to confront the evidence; but at the close of his defence confessed ingenuously, That there had been several meetings of persons at his house; that a commission was read; but that he had dissented from it. He acknowledged further, that he was present at the reading of letters, or of some part of them. 'But 'I was ignorant,' says he, 'of the danger that I 'now see I am in. The Act of August 2, 1650, 'makes it treason to hold any correspondence 'with Scotland, or to send letters thither, though 'but in a way of commerce, the two nations being 'at war: now here my counsel acquaints me with 'my danger, that I being present when letters were 'read in my house, am guilty of a concealment; 'and, therefore, as to that, I humbly lay myself at 'your mercy.'

And to move the court to shew mercy to him, he adds, 'I have been called a malignant and an 'apostate; but God is my witness, I never carried 'on a malignant interest; I shall retain my co-'venanting principles; from which, by the grace 'of God, I will never depart; neither am I an 'incendiary between the two nations of England

'and Scotland; but I am grieved for their divisions; and if I had as much blood in my veins as there is water in the sea, I would count it well spent to quench the fire that our sins have kindled between them. I have all along engaged my life and estate in the parliament's quarrel, against the forces raised by the late king; not from a prospect of advantage, but from conscience and duty; and I am so far from repenting, that, were it to do again upon the same unquestionable authority, and for the same declared ends, I should as readily engage in it as ever, though I wish from my soul that the ends of that just war had been better accomplished.

'Nor have my sufferings in this cause been inconsiderable. When I was a scholar at Oxford, and M. A., I was the first who publicly refused to subscribe to the canons imposed by the late archbishop; for which I was expelled the convocation-house. When I came first to London, which was about twelve years ago, I was opposed by the bishop of London; and it was about three years before I could obtain so much as a lecture. In the year 1640, or 1641, I was imprisoned in Newcastle, for preaching against the service-book; from whence I was removed hither by *habeas corpus*, and acquitted. In the beginning of the war between the late king and parliament, I was accused for preaching treason and rebellion, merely because I maintained in a sermon at Tenterden, in Kent, the lawfulness of a defensive war. I was again complained of to the commissioners at Uxbridge, for preaching a sermon which I hear is lately reprinted; and if it be printed according to the first copy, I will own every line of it. After all this, I have been three times in trouble since the late change of government. Once I was committed to custody, and twice cited before the committee for plundered ministers; but,

'for want of proof, was discharged. And now, last 'of all, this great trial is come upon me: I have 'been kept several weeks in close prison, and am 'now arraigned for my life, and like to suffer from 'the hands of those for whom I have done and 'suffered so much, and who have lift up their hands 'with me in the same covenant; and yet I am not 'conscious of any personal act proved against me, 'that brings me within any of your laws as to 'treason.

'Upon the whole,—Though I never wrote nor 'sent letters into Scotland, yet I confess their pro-'ceedings with the king are agreeable to my judg-'ment, and for the good of the nation; and 'though I disown the commission and instruc-'tions mentioned in the indictment, yet I have 'desired an agreement between the king and the 'Scots agreeably to the covenant; for they having 'declared him to be their king, I have desired 'and prayed, as a private man, that they might 'accomplish their ends upon such terms as were 'consistent with the safety of religion and the 'covenant.'

He concludes with beseeching the court that he might not be put to death for state reasons. He owns he had been guilty of a concealment; and begs the mercy of the court for it, promising for the future to lead a quiet and peaceable life. He puts them in mind, that when *Abiathar* the priest had done an unjustifiable action, king *Solomon* said, he would not put him to death at that time, 'because 'he bore the ark of the Lord God before David 'his father; and because he had been afflicted 'in all wherein his father had been afflicted. 'Thus,' he says, 'I commit myself and my all 'to God, and to your judgments and consciences, 'with the words of Jeremiah to the rulers of Israel: '*As for me, behold I am in your hands, do with* '*me as seemeth good and meet to you; but know* '*ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye*

'*shall surely bring innocent blood upon your-*
'*selves*; but I hope better things of you, though
'I thus speak.'

The court allowed Mr. Love the benefit of counsel learned in the law, to argue some exceptions against the indictment: but, after all that Mr. Hales could say for the prisoner, the court, after six days hearing, on the 5th of July, pronounced sentence against him as a traitor.

Great intercessions were made for the life of this godly person, by the chief of the Presbyterian party in London; not only by his wife and friends, says Mr. Granger, but by several parishes in London, and by fifty-four ministers. His wife presented several moving petitions; and two were presented by himself;—but the affairs of the Commonwealth were now at a crisis, and King Charles the Second having entered England at the head of sixteen thousand Scots, it was thought necessary to strike some terror into the Presbyterian party, by making an example of one of their favourite clergymen.

Mr. Love was ordered to be executed on Tower Hill, August 22, the very day the King entered Worcester at the head of his Scots army. He mounted the scaffold with great intrepidity and resolution, and taking off his hat two several times to the people, made a long speech, wherein he declared the satisfaction of his mind in the cause for which he suffered; —and then says, 'Beloved 'Christians, I am this day made a spectacle unto 'God, angels, and men; and among them I am 'made a grief to the godly, a laughing-stock to the 'wicked, and a gazing stock to all; yet, blessed be 'my God, not a terror to myself. Although there 'be but a little between me and death, yet this 'bears up my heart, there is but a little between me 'and Heaven. It comforted Dr. Taylor, the martyr, when he was going to execution, that there 'were but two stiles between him and his Father's 'house; there is a lesser way between me and my

'Father's house, but two steps between me and 'glory; it is but lying down upon the block, and I 'shall ascend upon a throne. I am this day sailing 'towards the ocean of eternity, through a rough 'passage to my haven of rest, through a red sea to 'the promised land. Methinks I hear God saying 'to me, as he did to Moses, "Go up to mount 'Nebo, and die there;" so go thou up to Tower 'Hill, and die there. Isaac said of himself, that 'he was old, and that he knew not the day of his 'death; but I cannot say this. I am young, and 'yet I know the day, the kind, and the place of 'my death also. It is such a kind of death as 'two famous preachers of the gospel were put to 'before me, John the Baptist and Paul the apostle. 'We have mention of the one in Scripture-story; 'of the other in ecclesiastical history; and Rev. 'xx. 4, "The saints were beheaded for the word, 'and for the testimony of Jesus;" but herein is 'the disadvantage which I am in, in the thoughts 'of many, who judge that I suffer not for the 'word or conscience, but for meddling with state-'matters. To this I shall briefly say, that it is an 'old practice of the Devil, to impute the cause of 'God's people's sufferings to be schemes against 'the state; when, in truth, it is their religion 'and conscience they are persecuted for. The rulers 'of Israel would put Jeremiah to death upon a 'civil account, though it was the truth of his pro-'phecy that made them angry, because he fell 'away to the Chaldeans. So Paul must die as a 'mover of sedition. The same thing is laid to my 'charge; whereas, indeed, it is because I pursued 'my covenant, and will not prostitute my prin-'ciples to the lusts of men; I had rather die a cove-'nant-keeper, than live a covenant-breaker. Be-'loved, I am this day to make a double exchange; 'I am exchanging a pulpit for a scaffold, and a 'scaffold for a throne;—and I might add a third,— 'I am changing this numerous multitude upon

'Tower Hill, for the innumerable company of angels in the holy hill of Zion; and I am changing a guard of soldiers for a guard of angels, which will receive me and carry me into Abraham's bosom. This scaffold is the best pulpit I ever preached in; for, in the church-pulpit, God, through his grace, made me an instrument to bring others to Heaven; but in this he will bring me to Heaven;—and, it may be, this speech upon a scaffold may bring God more glory than many sermons in a pulpit.' Afterwards he said, 'Though my blood be not the blood of nobles, yet it is Christian blood, minister's blood, yea, more, it is also innocent blood; and I speak it without vanity, the blood of a martyr. I magnify the riches of God's mercy and grace towards me, that I who was born in Wales, an obsure country, and of obscure parents, should be singled out for honourable suffering. For the first fourteen years of my life I never heard a sermon preached; yet, in the fifteenth year of my life, it pleased God to convert me. Blessed be God, who not only made me a Christian, but also a minister, judging me faithful and putting me into the ministry, which is my glory. I had rather be a preacher in a pulpit than a prince upon a throne; I had rather be an instrument to bring souls to Heaven, than that all nations should bring tribute to me. Formerly (said he) I have been under a spirit of bondage; yea, some times I have had more fear in drawing out of a tooth, than now I have for cutting off my head. When fear was upon me, death was not near; now, when death is near to me, my fear is vanished.

'Before I lay down my neck upon the block, I shall open my case, and that without animosity or revenge; God is my record, whom I serve in the spirit, I speak the truth and lie not; I do not bring a revengeful heart unto the scaffold this day. Before I came here, upon my bended knees, I have

'begged mercy for them that denied mercy to me; 'and I have prayed God to forgive them who 'would not forgive me. I have forgiven, from my 'heart, the worst enemy I have in all the world; 'and this is the worst that I wish to my accusers 'and prosecutors, who have pursued my blood, 'that I may meet their souls in Heaven.

'I am for a regulated mixed monarchy, which I 'judge to be one of the best governments in the world. 'I opposed, in my place, the forces of the late King, 'because I am against screwing up monarchy into 'tyranny, as much as against those who would pull 'it down into anarchy. I was never for putting 'the late King to death; whose person I did pro-'mise in my covenant to preserve;—and I judge 'it an ill way of curing the body politic, by cut-'ting off the political head. I die with my judg-'ment against the engagement; I pray God to 'forgive those who impose it and them that take it, 'and preserve them that refuse it. Neither would 'I be looked upon as owning this present govern-'ment; I die with my judgment against it;—and 'lastly, I die cleaving to all those oaths, vows, co-'venants, and protestations, that were imposed by 'the two Houses of Parliament. I see men thirst 'after my blood; which will but hasten my own 'happiness and their ruin.

'I have no more to say, but to desire the help 'of all your prayers, that God would give me the 'continuance and supply of divine grace, to carry 'me through this great work I am now to do; that 'I, who am to do a work I never did, may have a 'strength that I never had; that I may put off this 'body with as much quietness and comfort of 'mind as ever I put off my clothes to go to bed. 'And now I am to commend my soul to God, and to 'receive my fatal blow, I am comforted in this:— 'Though men kill me, they cannot damn me; and 'though they thrust me out of the world, yet 'they cannot shut me out of Heaven. I am going

'to my long home, to Heaven, my Father's house, 'to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the innumerable 'company of angels, to Jesus Christ the Mediator 'of the new covenant, to the spirits of just men 'made perfect, to God the Judge of all, in whose 'presence there is fulness of joy, and at whose right 'hand there are pleasures for evermore. I con-'clude with the speech of the apostle:—"I am now 'ready to be offered up, and the time of my de-'parture is at hand; but, I have finished my 'course, I have kept the faith: henceforth, there 'is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, and 'not for me only, but for all them that love the ap-'pearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whose 'blood I expect salvation and remission of sins;"— 'and so the Lord bless you all.'

After this he prayed with an audible voice, for himself and his fellow-sufferer, Mr. Gibbon, for the prosperity of England, for his covenanting brethren in Scotland, and for a happy union between the two nations; making no mention of the King.

Then he made a short prayer privately. He then rose from his knees, and said, 'Blessed be 'God, I am full of joy and peace in believing; I 'lie down with a world of comfort;'—and having taken leave of the ministers, and others who attended him, saying, 'The Lord bless you all,' he laid down his head over the block; and when he stretched out his hands, the executioner did his office by taking it off at one blow,—before he had attained the age of forty years.

Dr. Wild, in his Elegy, hath the following lines:—

Methinks I heard beheaded saints above,
Call to each other, "Sirs, make room for Love;
Who, when he came to tread the fatal stage,
Which proved his glory, and his en'mies rage,

His blood ne'er run to's heart, — Christ's blood was there
Reviving it,—his own was all to spare;
Which, rising in his cheeks, did seem to say,
Is this the blood you thirst for? Take't, I pray."
Spectators, in his looks such life did see,
That they appear'd more like to die than he.
Lightnings, which fill'd the air with blazing light,
Did serve for torches at that dismal night;
In which, and all next day, for many hours,
Heav'n groan'd in thunders, and did weep in showers!
Nor do I consider that God thunder'd so,
When Boanerges slaughter'd lay below.

Mr. Love was a zealous Presbyterian, a popular preacher, and highly esteemed by his brethren. He was buried, with great lamentation on the north side of the chancel of St. Lawrence Jury. His funeral sermon was preached by Dr. Manton, and published, under the title of "The Saints Triumph over Death."

II. As to the publication of these Sermons, which was the next event after the martyrdom of the preacher, — you have now before you the celebrated names of the first editors. They inform the readers, that these are not only his last, but the only authentic volume of his sermons published after his decease.

Since the preacher was arrested upon a charge of treason, we might have expected that his last sermons contained some political discussions: but that is not the case: as they observe, his whole discourse is not about *state*, but *soul affairs*.

Though I have seen only one edition of these sermons (besides that printed at Bungay) yet it is probable there have been many. That at Bungay was taken from the first that was published; and

this is taken from that printed at Bungay, which differs from it, beside this Preface, in the following respects:—

I. I have fixed the Title to this according to the original edition.

II. The first editors' preface is prefixed to this.

III. The speech made on the scaffold is considerably enlarged in this.

IV. The part which was omitted in the middle of the first sermon in that, is replaced in this.

V. The references which were placed in the margin, are put in the body of the work.

To the Sermons is added an Appendix, containing some transactions with Mr. Love *in prison*; which, it will appear, rendered that gloomy mansion not the least important scene of his life. Here likewise, this edition differs from that at Bungay, in two respects:—

1. The Notes on the Predictions are wholly omitted.

2. Another Letter from Mrs. Love to her Husband is inserted.

My leading reason for republishing this work, and altering the contents, are, that since the other edition has been out of print, many inquiries have been made after it; several professing to have derived much profit and pleasure in reading it; and desirous that more of the author might be known from his own declaration, and from those who were intimately acquainted with him in his lifetime. As to the matter contained in the sermons, I frankly acknowledge I find it in general very congenial to my own sentiments, although I do not consider myself bound to justify every sentence in the whole book. I admire what I read of the author in his honest integrity, and esteem him in love for his work's sake; but more especially the grace which he treats of, exemplified in his speech, behaviour, and sufferings. I can heartily

write with the faithful Editors of the first edition, "The Lord make these, and all the labours of his servants, profitable to his church."

It may be that some of the faithful witnesses to the truth as it is in Jesus, may be called to seal it with their blood, in defending it with their King, against the errors and corruptors of Christianity in our land, sooner than many are aware of.

Our honourable and pious ancestors laboured to bring about that *regulated and mixed monarchy*,—considered by our Author and themselves, *to be one of the best governments on earth*; which they effected, under God, at the Revolution. Let us, as true Protestants, who live under this government, as descendants of such worthy ancestors, maintain in a godly manner, inviolably, the privileges handed down to us, against all innovations of men of despotic and Jesuitical principles; and rally round our rightful Monarch's throne, to defend and support the righteous cause,—"lest we become a land of graven images." I know of no *right* that God has given to his rational creatures, natural or civil, in any nation to be idolaters, or to make graven images, to bow down unto them.

I think that all religious subjects, of every denomination, ought to revere and love our venerable Sovereign, for the faithful stand he has made against the inroad of Popery.

May the Lord arm us for every trial, and grant us strength for our day, and enable us to fight the good fight of faith, so as to overcome,—according to our solemn engagements to God, the King, and our Lord Jesus Christ!

That thou and I, my dear reader, as subjects of grace in Christ's kingdom, may glorify him, in life and death, is the hearty wish of,

Thine to serve in the Lord,

Ipswich, May 1, 1810. EDWARD DAVIES.

SERMON I.

TRUTH AND GROWTH OF GRACE.

Preached at St. Lawrence Jury, London, March 9, 1651.

1 KINGS xiv. part of the 13th verse.

Because in him there is found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam.

THIS chapter contains in it Abijah's prophecy, foretelling what dismal judgments should befal Jeroboam and his posterity, for his idolatry in worship, and defection from the government and house of David; for which sins God did destroy him and his posterity; and not only the bad, but the good were punished for their father's guilt; for so it is intimated in this verse out of which the text is taken. Here was a young man, Jeroboam's son, that should die for the father's fault: and yet there was a mitigation of the punishment, that he should not die after the same manner that the rest did: "He shall go to his grave in peace, because in him there is found some good," &c. Behold the goodness of God! A little good in him; and yet the great God takes notice of the little good in him! God found, as it were, one pearl in a heap of pebbles; *one good* young man in Jeroboam's household, that had *some good* in him toward the Lord God of Israel. In the whole verse are three parts.

I. A lamentation for the death of this son of Jeroboam. It is said, "all Israel shall mourn for him;" and so they did (v. 18); which argued there was goodness in him; for if he had not been desired and prized while he lived, he would not have been so lamented at his death.

II. A limitation of his punishment. "He only of Jeroboam's family shall come to the grave; the rest of his posterity that died in the city, dogs should eat; and him that dieth in the field should the fowls of the air devour." v. 11.

III. The commendation of his life. "In him was found some good," &c. Of this I am now to treat.

He is commended by the Holy Ghost; for his goodness is set forth, 1. By the quality of his goodness: it was *a good thing*, not a good word only, or a good purpose or inclination, with which too many content themselves, but it was *a good action*.

2. By the quantity of it: it was but *some* little good thing that was found in him; and yet that little good God did not despise or overlook.

3. By the sincerity of his goodness: there are two notable demonstrations of this young man's goodness. First, It was toward the Lord God of Israel. Second, It was in Jeroboam's house.

First. His goodness was "toward the Lord God of Israel." This argued Paul's sincerity; that in his speaking, writing, and actions, he could, and did appeal to God. (2 Cor. xii. 19, and Gal. i. 20.) "That religion," saith the apostle, "is pure and undefiled, that is so before God and the Father." (Jam. i. 27.) Many hypocrites may be good toward men, who are not so toward God. To be rich indeed, is to be "rich toward God;" true repentance is "repentance toward God" (Luke xii. 21); and he is *unblameable* indeed, who is "void of offence toward God as well as toward men." Acts xx. 21. and xxiv. 16.

Second. He was good in the house of Jeroboam. A wicked man may seem good in a good place; but to be good in a bad place, argues men to be good indeed. To be good in David's house, this was not so much: but for this young man to be good in the house of Jeroboam his father, whom the scripture brands for his idolatry; that "he made Israel to sin," and yet could not *make his son to sin*,—this

argued he was sincerely good, as it did argue Lot's sincerity to be righteous in Sodom: for Job to be good in Chaldea,—to be saints in Nero's family,—and to fear God in Jeroboam's family,—this is goodness indeed.

There is only one difficulty in the text, viz. What was that good thing that was found in Abijah? For answer to this, it is true, the scripture doth not particularly express what that good thing was which was found in him. But Testatus and P. Martyr affirm, from the Hebrew Rabbins, that when the Jews of the ten tribes did on their appointed times repair to Jerusalem to worship according to the command of God, and Jeroboam commanded soldiers to intercept them,—that this Abijah did hinder the soldiers from killing them, and gave them passes to go to Jerusalem to worship God, and encouraged them therein, notwithstanding the rage of his father, who had forsaken the true worship of God, and set up calves at Dan and Bethel. Others think the goodness of this young prince was in this: That he would not consent to his father in taking away the government from the house of David. But where the scripture hath not a tongue to speak, we have not an ear to hear; and therefore we shall not undertake to determine what the scripture hath not determined.

There are many collateral observations, which I shall deduce from the several circumstances in the text, and but name some of them. I. From the consideration that this good Abijah died: *That good men, and useful, and hopeful instruments, may be taken away by death,—when wicked men may live long upon the earth.* Bad Jeroboam lived long; his good son died soon: so true is that of Solomon, "A righteous man may perish in his righteousness, when a wicked man may prolong his days in his wickedness." Briars, thorns, and thistles, wither not so soon as lilies and roses. They may be taken out of the world, of whom the world is not worthy;

and they remain in the world who are not worthy to live in the world.

2. From the consideration of the death of godly Abijah, when wicked Nadab, the other son of Jeroboam lived (1 Kings xv. 26) observe, *that good children may be taken away by death from their parents, when ungodly children may live to be a shame and curse to their parents.*

3. From the consideration of the cause why this gracious young man died so soon: it was for his father's sins, as we may gather from v. 9, 10, 11, 12, *that good children as well as bad, may be outwardly punished for the sins of their parents.*

4. From all Israel's lamenting the death of this hopeful young man, observe, *That good men who have been and might be further useful in their lives, should be much lamented at their death.* Isa. lvii. 1. "They that have lived desired, should die lamented."

5. From these words "He shall go to his grave in peace:"—*That it is a great blessing to go to one's grave in peace in times of war and common calamity.*

6. He was good toward God: *That he is good indeed, who is so to God, as well as unto men: many are good in man's sight, that are not so in the sight of God.* Rom. ii. 28.

There are two other circumstances, upon which I shall a little enlarge myself, before I come to the main point I intend to handle.

First, From the *age* of this son of Jeroboam, who is here commended for his goodness, it is said, "he was a child," v. 12; whence it my be observed, *It is very commendable to see goodness in young people: to see young men good men, is a very commendable thing.* There were many good men in that time; but to be good so soon as Abijah was *when he was a child,* the scripture records this to his praise.

1. I shall shew you that it is a commendable

thing to see young men good men. This I prove, because the scripture makes very honourable mention of young men, when good men; as first of Obadiah, — "that he feared the Lord from his youth (1 Kings xviii. 12.); and it is recorded, to the honour of Timothy, "that he knew the holy scriptures from a child." 2 Tim. iii. 15. Jerome conceives, that John was the most beloved disciple, because he was the youngest of all. John xiii. 23. "God remembers the kindness of our youth." Jer. ii. 2. God takes more kindly the kindness of our youth than of our age. It was matter of joy unto John, that he found children walking in the truth. 2 John 4. Because God commends moral and common goodness in the young man in the gospel, Christ is said "to love him" (Mark x. 21) for his moral goodness and natural ingenuity.

2. The reason why it is so commendable in a young man to be a good man is this: because their temptations are more, and their affections are stronger to carry them from God. Youth hath a stronger aptitude and propensity to sin than any other age; their blood is sooner stirred up to choler, and their strength to lust. As every relation hath its special sin, so every age of a man's life:—old age is peevish and covetous; middle age, proud, malicious, and revengeful; and young men are usually rash, lustful, and voluptuous; and therefore Paul bids Timothy "Fly youthful lusts" (2 Tim. ii. 22); and, therefore, seeing youth is exposed to so many temptations, and subject to so many corruptions, it is rare to see young men good.

"Oh then be exhorted, you that are young, to become religious betimes; and to quicken you hereunto, consider, — 1st, If you be not good in your youth, you can never use the psalmist's arguments: *Cast me not off, O Lord, in the time of my old age! forsake me not when my strength faileth!* Psalm lxxi. 9, compared with verse 5; and his argument he had before; *for thou art my hope, and hast been*

my trust from my youth; and who would not be without such an argument on his death-bed!

2dly, Consider, there are recorded in Scripture many young men that are good, of all sorts and conditions, and of all callings; and the Holy Ghost doth not only set down their goodness, but their age in which they were good. Solomon, a young king; Obadiah, a young courtier; Daniel, a young prophet; John, a young apostle; Timothy, a young preacher; and here Abijah, a young prince; and all these were good men, and are recorded for our example and encouragement.

3dly, Consider, that God, in the dispensations of his grace, bestows it upon young men, and passeth by the elder. Thus Abel, the younger, was righteous, and Cain wicked; Jacob, the younger brother, loved, and Esau hated; David, the youngest of Jesse's sons, and yet the best of them, and the chosen of the Lord. 1 Sam. xvi. 11, 12. God doth many times do as Jacob did, when he blessed the children of Joseph, he stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon the head of Ephraim, the younger, — so doth God, in the dispensation of his grace, many times pitch on the youngest. God saith, as Joseph of all the rest, *Bring me Benjamin*; and gives him a double portion.

4th, The time of your youth is the freest age of your life to betake yourselves to the exercise of religion and duties of godliness. Young men, who are servants, have more freedom and less cares than when they grow in years, and the cares and incumbrances of family fill their hands and clog their hearts. 1 Cor. vii. 33.

5th, Consider, if thou art gracious in youth, thy sins of thy youth may trouble thy conscience in the old age. Many young men, who are active and venturous in the heat of their youth, get those bodily bruises and blows, that they feel the ach of to their dying day. Thou that givest a blow or a bruise to thy conscience in thy youth, mayst feel

this in thy old age. Those sins which now thou feelest not, may be a trouble to thy conscience, and an aching to thy heart when thou liest on thy death-bed; and tho' God do not remember the sins of your youth to damn your souls, yet he may make you remember them, so as to be a trouble to your consciences. These things, which are the joys of youth, may be a bitter burden of old age. Take heed of laying a load on thy conscience when thou art young, lest God *write bitter things against thee* when old; *and make thee to possess the sins of thy youth, and fill thy bones with the sins of thy youth.* Job xiii. 26; xx. 11.

A second use of reproof to two sorts of people. First, Of those who instead of being good when young, are wicked when they are young; such as fill their youth with manifold evils. Usually, youth are subject to these evils: —

1. Pride is the sin of youth! A preacher *must not be a young novice,* lest *he be lifted up with pride.* 1 Tim. iii. 6.

2. Rashness and indiscretion are usually the sins of a young head. 'Exhort young men,' says Paul to Titus, 'to be *sober-minded,* to be *discreet, or wise.*' How rash and heady was the counsel of the young men to Rehoboam, which made him lose his kingdom!—Years teach experience!

3. Lustfulness, which was the ground of Paul's caution to young Timothy (ii. 2, 22). If Timothy, who was so abstemious a man, that Paul gave him advice to *drink some wine with his water,* had need of this caution, how much more have they that are not so exercised in duties of mortification;—which gave Solomon ground to give that counsel, *Put away the evils of thy flesh*; for *childhood and youth are vanity!* He was a young man that followed the harlot to her house. Eccles. xi. 10. and Prov. vii. 7, 8.

4th, Fickleness and unsettledness of judgment; and, therefore, in times of error the younger sort

are most subject to be seduced. *Children are tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine.* Eph. iv. 14. The Hebrews call a young man by a word which is derived from another, that signifies *to toss to and fro;* intimating, that they are unsettled in their judgments and resolutions. How soon was the mind of that rich and forward young man changed, mentioned in the gospel!

5. To scoff and condemn the aged: they were children who did mock the aged prophet. 2 Kings ii. 23. The young men derided Job. (xxx. 1, 12).

6 Sensual pleasures and pastimes. They do *rejoice and cheer their hearts in the days of their youth.* Eccles. xi. 9. *Sampson made a feast; for so used the young men to do.* Judges xiv. 10; Job i. 4.

Secondly, Reproof lights heavily on those who seem to be good in their youth; but in their old age cast off goodness. How many are like Joash, who seemed to be a good young man whilst he seemed to be under the tuition of Jehoiada! — but when he was dead, how did he break out! How many are there in the world who have lost their affections after God, which they had in their youth! It was a brand set upon Solomon, who, tho' when young, was well taught by his mother; yet when he grew old, his wives turned away his heart from God. So David had his first days, which were better than his last. Even so amongst us, we have too many who, when they were young, did love religion, and delight in ordinances; and when they became old, have abated exceedingly; which may make them fear the sincerity of their goodness; for he that is truly good in youth, will be so in his old age.

Second. A second remarkable circumstance is this:—that this young Abijah was good "in the house of Jeroboam." Whence observe, *That it is a great commendation for men to retain their goodness while they live in bad places and families.*

That this is so, we may see by that commendable

mention the Scriptures make of such as were good in evil places. Thus God commends the church of Pergamos:—'I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is, and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain amongst you where Satan dwelleth.' Rev. ii. 13.—Pergamos was a city more given to idolatry than all the cities of Asia; and yet there were some that held fast the name of Christ, and did not deny his faith. To be a saint in Nero's family is very commendable; and the reason thereof is,

1. Because many of God's children have failed, and abated much of their goodness in bad places. How did Peter fall in the high-priest's hall! though when in good company he was zealous, yet there he denied Christ! So Abraham, when he was in Gerar, and Isaac also, denied their wives. So Joseph, in Pharaoh's court, learned the court-oath, to swear by the life of Pharaoh. Hence God commands the children of Israel not to mix themselves with the heathens, lest they learn their manners and customs. Bad places are like bad air for zeal to breathe in: as sheep among briars lose part of their fleece, so good men in bad company lose part of their goodness. As one scabby sheep may infect the whole flock, so one root of bitterness may spring up and defile many.

2. Because it is a clear evidence of the sincerity of a man's goodness to be good in a bad place.—This shews thy grace to be grace indeed, when thou hast discouragements to be good, and then art holy. This is a demonstration that thou art sincerely good, and that thy goodness is not counterfeit, and taken up upon any sinister and hypocritical end. It is good to be good with the good; but it is most excellent to be good among the bad, and to be best among the worst.

1. From hence learn the power and unloseable-

ness of saving grace. Grace makes a man good in the worst times. Let a man be cast into prison or bad company (which is the worst temptation) yet he shall not lose his grace. True grace is compared to oil: now cast oil into a vessel of water, and the oil will not mix with the water, but lie on the top; grace will swim upon the water of temptation. As all the water in the salt sea cannot make the fish salt; so all the wicked in the world cannot change the nature of grace. A good man like the fish, retains his goodness in bad places: thus Joseph retained his goodness in the court of wicked Pharaoh; Nehemiah, in the court of Artaxerxes; Obadiah, in Ahab's court; Daniel, in Nebuchadnezzar's; the saints in Nero's household; and Abijah in wicked and idolatrous Jeroboam's house.

2. Though it be a commendable thing to be good in bad places, yet you ought to bewail your living in bad places; it is your misery, though not your sin. Thus did Isaiah: "Woe is me, I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." Isa. vi. 5. So David: "Woe is me that I dwell in Mesech, and have my habitation in the tents of Kedar!" (Psa. cxx. 5. Gen. xxv. 13) *i. e.* with the sinful, idolatrous, and barbarous people, the posterity of Ishmael. Thus Lot's righteous soul was vexed from day to day while he dwelt in Sodom, and saw their unclean conversations. 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8.

3. Hence we may gather, that it is our duty, the more bad the place or family is where God hath cast our dwelling, the better and more blameless you should labour to be. You will by this adorn your profession, stop the mouths of adversaries, allure and win others to embrace Christianity. "We must be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in

the world." Phil. ii. 15. Stars shine brightest in a dark night, and fire burns hottest in a cold and frosty day; so should thy star of profession shine brightest in darkest places where thou livest; and the fire of thy zeal burn hottest in cold time, when the love of many waxeth cold.

4. Then certainly it is a vain plea for men to excuse their wickedness, because they live in bad places. This was Abraham's fault, to excuse his lie by being at Gerar. Seneca blames men for laying the fault of their badness on the place where they live: "I am not ambitious by nature; but no man that lives at Rome can be otherwise: I am not given to costly and rich apparel: but I must do so when I am at Rome." It is the badness of thy heart, and not the place, that makes thee bad. No place, though ever so good, can exempt a man from sin: the angels sinned in Heaven; Adam in Paradise; Judas in Christ's family; and no place, though ever so bad, can excuse a man from sin.

5. If it be so commendable to be good in bad places, then it is abominable to be bad in good places; to be dirty swine in a fair meadow. Oh! how many are bad in good families, who despise good counsels, and hate the duties of religion in religious families! If it was bad for Peter to be evil among the high priest's servants, how abominable was it for Judas to be a traitor among the apostles, and in the family of Christ himself!

6. Delight not to be in bad places and company: to delight in such, argues that thou art bad thyself. We are to hate the "garment spotted with the flesh" (Jude 23). Some expound this, to avoid the *occasions of sin*; but Mr. Perkins gives this sense, *To hate bad company;* and he says it alludes to the ceremonial law, "that if a man had a leprous garment, or a garment any otherwise made unclean, his company was to be avoided" (Lev. xv. 4). God, therefore, gave that command, "not to plough with an ox and ass together" (Deut. xxii. 10.);—

the ass was an unclean creature, and the ox was one of the clean beasts, and they must not be in the same yoke;—*to note*, say divines, *that God's people and profane persons must not be yoked together:* — though they may occasionally meet together, yet they must not be yoked together; a man may trade with the wickedest man alive; commerce is not forbidden, but our joining with the wicked men in needless familiarity (1 Cor. v. 9, 10. Psalm xxvi. 4, 5.)

7. Keep company with the godly, and delight yourselves with such as are good. It is lawful to be in bad company when a just occasion calls; but it is profitable to be in good company. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but he that is a companion of fools shall be destroyed (Prov. xiii. 20). As a man that comes into a shop of perfumes, will carry away the scent with him,—so man by conversing with the godly, shall carry away some good with him. Labour to choose those for thy companions from whom thou mayest get some good; but if God should cast thee into a house like the family of Jeroboam, imitate good Abijah, of whom it said, "That in him was found some good toward the Lord God of Israel, even in the house of Jeroboam."

SERMON II.

Preached at St. Lawrence Jury, London, the same day, 1651.

The same Text.

HAVING dispatched the observations which may be gathered from the circumstance in the text, I come to that main doctrine which I intend to handle, which is,

God doth not only exactly take notice of, but also tenderly cherish, and graciously reward the smallest beginnings and weakest measures of grace, which he works in the hearts of his own people.

I might produce a cloud of testimonies to confirm this point. Our Saviour Christ said, "that he will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax" (Mat. xii. 20). Observe, it is not said, the strong oak shall not be broken, but the bruised reed shall not be broken; nor the light and flaming torch,—but the smoking flax shall not be quenched. Smoking flax, where there is but little fire and much smoke of infirmity, yet Christ will not quench it; *i. e.* he will cherish it. In this figurative expression less is spoken than intended, "the words being adapted to our view rather than to the purpose of God." He will be so far from quenching, that he will cherish the smoking flax; as in another place God has said, "that he will not despise the broken heart" (Psalm li. 17); *i. e.* he will highly esteem it. Solomon speaks of the fig-tree putting forth her green figs, and the vine with her tender grapes gives a good smell; that is, the little measure and weak beginnings of grace in young converts do please the Lord Jesus Christ, and are as a sweet smell in his nostrils. Again, Christ saith, "Let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape

appear, and the pomegranate bud forth" (Cant. ii. 13. vii. 12). The green buds are regarded by Christ as well as the ripe and grown fruit.

In opening the doctrine, I shall endeavour to clear these two things: — 1. That some of God's people have but weak measures and small beginnings of grace. 2. Though there be but a little grace, yet God will regard and reward it.

I. That some of God's people have but a little grace, but have the beginnings of grace wrought in their souls. — In the handling whereof are three things: — 1. The truth of the proposition may be made good from the Scriptures. 2. I will lay down notes of discovery, to know such as have but small measures of grace wrought in them. 3. And then shew why God, in his wisdom, will not suffer his people to be all of equal strength and stature in grace.

1. How doth it appear that some of God's people are *but weak in grace?*

1. By the different names and titles that are given unto Christians in holy Scriptures, arguing they are of different measure and growth in grace. Some are called "strong" men, and others "weak" (Rom. xv. 1); some are called "babes in Christ" (1 Cor. iii. 1), and others called "grown men" (1 John ii. 14); some are called "trees of righteousness, plants of renown" (Isaiah lxi. 3) that grow "like cedars in Lebanon" (Psalm xcii. 12); others are but "a bruised reed," (Mat. xii. 20); some are "hinds in Christ's flock and lambs;" others are as "he-goats" that go stately before the flock (Cant. i. 8, and John xxi. 15, 16, 17); some have grace flaming forth in much zeal and vivacity; they have the "spirit of burning" (Isaiah iv. 4); and others are but smoking flax; *i. e.* Christians that have much of the smoke of infirmity, and but little of the flame of grace.

2. By the analogy that is between spiritual and natural differences of age, strength, and stature in man. — The holy Scripture exactly sets down all the

different degrees of grace, under the similitude of the different ages of men. There is "a forming of Christ" (Gal. iv. 19.) in the heart, and so a spiritual conception. There are those that are but "new-born babes" (1 Peter i. 23, and ii. 2) in Christ. There are some that are advanced from infancy to be "young men." There are some that are grown men in Christ,—"old men" (1 John ii. 13); and all this doth but set forth the different degrees of grace that are in Christians, some having less, some more. In the church of Christ, which is his orchard, there are trees of all sorts; spikenard, and saffron, calamus, and cinnamon; with all trees of frankincense, myrrh, and aloes." (Cant. iv. 14.)

Brightman, on this Scripture notes, that hereby is meant the several sorts of Christians. Spikenard and saffron are young weak professors; these are tender plants, that scarce lift up the head above the ground. Calamus and cinnamon, which are shrubs of two cubits high, note Christians of a middle size; and the other trees note Christians of a more eminent measure and growth in grace.

3. A second question is, How may a man know himself, that he is but of a little measure and small beginning in grace?

1. To be much in dependence on duties, argues thou art but weak in grace. A young Christian is like a young carpenter; he makes many chips and hath many blows, but doth not make such smooth work as an experienced carpenter, who will make fewer chips, and at fewer blows better work: so young Christians are much in the use of duty, but are apt to rely upon duty; they think duties make them saints, and they are apt to make saviours of their duties. Young Christians are affectionate in duties, and frequent in their duties, and see not their failings in their duties, and so are apt to rest on their duties. As it is a sign of an apostate professor to cast off duty, so also a note

of a young and weak professor to rest too much upon his duties.

2. A weak Christian is not clearly insighted into the close and spiritual failings of which cleave to his performances. He doth see his gifts, and take notice of his affections, but he doth not see the vanity of his mind, the unsoundness of his ends, his carnal dependence upon his duty, self-love, and vainglory; but in course of time a grown Christian doth take notice of these things. An experienced Christian will take as much notice of his failing in duty as of his ability in it; and though he discerns an enlargement of gifts and graces in him at sometimes, yet he still discerns much spiritual pride, popular applause, ostentation of gifts, too much forwardness in setting out his parts, which a weak Christian seldom perceives.

3. To have a scrupulous conscience about matters of indifference, argues a weak Christian; for so the apostle calls them *weak in the faith*, such as did bind conscience when the Scriptures left it free. One believer thought he might eat any thing, and another doubted of the lawfulness of eating sundry things. Now those that doubted, the apostle calls "weak" (Rom. xiv. 1, 21, and xv. 1); "and the weak conscience is apt to be defiled" (1 Cor. viii. 7; and ix. 2). Not to know our liberty, and to abuse our liberty, is an argument we have but little grace. Young converts make more sins than ever God made; they perplex and entangle themselves merely in indifferent things. It is true, there ought to be a conscientious tenderness in all Christians; tenderness of conscience is our duty, but a tormenting, entangling scrupulosity is our infirmity; and yet, as a weak Christian is better than no Christian, a weak faith is better than a dead faith; so a scrupulous conscience is better than a seared conscience.

4. To be so intently set on the exercises of religion as to neglect our particular callings, is a sign we are but weak in grace. It was a good saying of that famous man of God, Dr. Sibbs, "I like that

Christian well that will hear much and live much; that will pray much and work much." In young converts, their affections are strong and stirring, and they think they can never hear enough; and they many times do neglect the duties of their callings, which doth argue their weakness and infirmity. An experienced grown Christian is regular in his general and particular calling; so as the one shall not jostle and hinder the other.

5. To have mens' persons in admiration, argues weakness in grace; such were the Corinthians who had mens' persons in admiration; the apostle calls them "children, babes, and poor, low, and carnal Christians; babes" (1 Cor. iii. 1, 4) though they had the life of Christians, yet they had but little of the strength of Christians. *They were carnal, they savoured more of the flesh than of the Spirit.* Ignorance is often a cause of admiration. Weak Christians who have but little knowledge, are apt to be so taken with mens' persons, that one cries, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; and so fall into the sin condemned of having "the faith of Christ with respect of persons." James ii. 1. To cry up one minister, and to cry down others, — to idolize some, and to despise others, argues that thou art weak in faith. A solid Christian loves all good ministers, and can contemn none.

6. To be easily seduced and led away into error, argues but weakness in grace; those the apostle calls "children who are tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph. iv. 14). Weakness of head doth argue that grace is not very strong in the heart. The way not to fall from our steadfastness, is to grow in grace; for the apostle Peter doth join those two duties together, having given a caution (v. 17) not to fall from steadfastness (v. 18,) he gives counsel "to grow in grace" (2 Pet. iii. 17, 18). Strong Christians are steadfast, whereas weak ones are inconstant; and, therefore, those professors who have been whirled about with divers

opinions, it is an evidence they have but weak grace, if any.

7. Such as are only acquainted with the common principles of religion, without further search into the depths and mysteries of religion. — There are some professors who may be fitly styled Babes in Christ, because they have need of milk, "being unskilful in the word of righteousness" (Heb. v. 12, 13); that is, in the more solid doctrines of the gospel concerning Christ, who is our righteousness. Thus the disciples and apostles of Christ knew but little of the mystery of our redemption at first, "and were ignorant concerning the passion of Christ" (Luke ix. 45); "of the resurrection" (Mark ix. 10); "as also of the ascension of Christ" (John xvi. 16, 17) till the Holy Ghost came and taught them these things, and brought those things to remembrance that Christ had taught them.

8. Weak Christians are strong in affections and not in judgment; they have usually more heat than light; young Christians are like young horses, they have much mettle, but are not so fit for a journey, because they are not so thorough paced. There are many Christians who have much zeal and affection, but are not so solid in their judgments; but this argues much weakness in grace.

9. A weak Christian is one that cannot bear reproof. Sharp weather will discover whether thou art of a weak or sound body; so a sharp reproof will discover whether thou art of a weak spiritual temper and constitution. When Nathan came to David he could bear the reproof, though the prophet told him to his face "he was the man that had sinned" (2 Sam. xii. 7); but Asa, though a good man, could not endure the faithful reproof of a prophet, but was wroth with the seer, "and put him in the prison-house." 2 Chron. xvi. 10.

10. A weak believer is one that can trust God for his soul, but not for his body. So Jesus Christ

argues that those had "little faith" (Mat. vi. 30.) who did expect Heaven and happiness from God their Father, and durst trust him with their souls and eternal concernments, and yet durst not trust him for food and raiment. There are those that dare trust God for Heaven, and yet not trust him for earth; but these are *oligopistoi*, of little faith. The disciples when they wanted bread, began to reason amongst themselves how they should be supplied. "O ye of little faith (saith Christ) why do ye thus reason?" Mat. xvi. 8. *Can you trust me for the bread of eternal life, and dare you not trust me for the bread of this life!*

1. Be not then discouraged, you that discern in yourselves but small measures of grace; look on your wants and imperfections, so as to grow in grace, and not to be content with any measure: but look not on the small beginnings in grace as a discouragement to you. When you see in a field a great oak, you may say, this great tree was once but a small acorn. Those Christians who are now but small sprigs, may hereafter be tall cedars: say to thy soul, though I am but weak, yet I shall be strong. Grace where it is true will be growing, the *smoking flax* may be a burning and shining lamp in God's candlestick; and, therefore, as you must not be content with the greatest measure of grace, so neither be discouraged with the least measure of grace; "a grain of mustard-seed may grow a great tree." Mat. xvii. 20.

2. Content not yourselves with small measures of grace; a little of the world will not content you. In the womb a foot contents us, three feet in the cradle, and seven feet in the grave; but betwixt the cradle and the grave, a whole world will not content us; for wealth and desire of it, thou art as the horse-leech, which cries Give, give; and as the grave that never saith It is enough; and for grace wilt thou be content with a little?

SERMON III.

Preached at St. Lawrence Jury, London, March 16, 1651.

The same Text.

We have given some Scripture characters of those that have a little grace, now we proceed to resolve a third question: —

Third Question. *Why doth God so order and ordain it, that, among his own people, all shall not be of an equal stature in Christ; but there are of them some in whom there shall be but the beginnings of grace found?*

Answer. It is true, it is not with regeneration as it was in the creation;—it is not with the trees of Righteousness as it was with the trees of Paradise, which were created all perfect at the first: but it is not so in the work of grace. We are not perfectly sanctified, nor at once; but we perfect holiness in the fear of God, and that by degrees; and God hath given to some of his people but small beginnings and measures of grace; and that for these reasons: —

1. To put a difference between our estate on earth, and our being in Heaven.— In Heaven we shall all have an equal stature in grace, though it be disputed that there are different degrees of glory; but in Heaven, the "spirits of just men shall all be made perfect" (Heb. xii. 23); and there we shall all come unto the "measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Eph. iv. 13.— All believers here are justified by God alike. God doth not acquit the strong, and hold guilty the weak, but justification is alike to all; but our sanctification is not alike. When we come to Heaven, our sanctification shall be then as our justification is now; that is, perfect and equal;

we shall have not only a perfection of parts, but of degrees.

2. This is to make men live in a continual dependence upon divine influx and supplies from the Spirit of God. — If children should be born perfect men as Adam was created, we should not then see that continual need of, and dependence on our parents. We are bred in the womb, and afterward born into the world; and then, by degrees, grow up from stature to stature; and so it is in grace God deals thus. Converting grace doth not make us so perfect as we shall be afterward. At the first creation he made the trees all fruitful, and at their full growth; but now it is otherwise: they are first kernels or seeds; then plants, before they are grown trees; and they have dependence on the influences of Heaven: so we are first babes, then young men, and then strong men in Christ, to keep our souls in a dependence on God's grace.

3. For the greater ornament of the mystical body of Christ — In a natural body, if every member should be of an equal bigness, the body would be monstrous: but the body is so proportioned in its different members, that the lesser become serviceable to the greater; and so they all orderly discharge their mutual operations. As in music, there would be no harmony if the strings were all of an equal bigness; but one string being the bass, and the other the treble, that makes the music to be more melodious: so it is in grace; the different degrees of grace make the body of Christ more harmonious. It is here as in some curious piece of needle-work: if all the silks were of one colour, it would not set out the work with so much lustre and amiableness as the variety of colours will do.

4. To make God's people see the necessity of maintaining fellowship and communion together, to edify and build up each other. — There would

be no need of Christian discourse and holy fellowship, did not our weakness require it. As among the members of the body, God hath so ordered them, that each member is serviceable to another; "the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee" (1 Cor. xii 21); so among the people of God, some being weak, others strong, there is a necessity of maintaining communion together. There is an instinct in nature, that things weak in themselves cleave to those things which are stronger than they. "The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks. Prov. xxx. 26. Among birds, the dove, the silliest and most shiftless creature, yet she hides herself in "clefts of the rock" (Cant. ii. 14); the vine, among the trees the weakest, yet it clings to the wall; the hops, among the plants, yet it twines about the pole: so God hath ordered it, in his infinite wisdom, that some Christians should be stronger, and some weaker in grace, that the strong may help the weak, and each be serviceable to one another.

5. To set out the glory of God in all his glorious attributes.

First, This different size of grace in Christians doth glorify the mercy of God; and the free grace of God, who, when there are some Christians that have but a little grace, yet God rewards those small measures of grace with great measures of glory.

Second, This magnifies the power of God, who, when we are weak, yet the great God manifests his power in our weakness; yea, "his strength is made perfect in weakness;" and, therefore, Paul adds (ver. 10) "For when I am weak, then am I strong;" that is, "in Christ." 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.—Is it not a demonstration of great power to keep a small spark of fire, that it shall not be quenched in a flood of water? Yet behold, that little spark

of grace in thee shall not be quenched in thee by the flood and torrent of thy corruptions. It is by God's power that the least measure of grace shall be preserved. There is not so much of God's power seen in preserving the angels as a weak believer; for the angels, though mutable, yet are perfect creatures, — they have no weights of sins and corruptions to pull them down. But, alas! we have such a bias and inclination to sin, that we are apt to be turned aside from God every moment. The power of God is more seen in preserving a poor believer in the state of grace, than in preserving the angels in the state of innocency; and as God's power is seen in preserving of a little grace, so it is also seen in the increasing of small grace. Grace is like to that cloud which the prophet's servant saw, "which at first was but like a man's hand;" but afterwards, "it overspread the whole heavens." 1 Kings xviii. 44, 45. True grace is of a spreading and increasing nature; and, therefore, the increase of our graces may be shadowed out in the vision of the waters of the sanctuary, which at first were but "to the ancles," after that "to the knees," then "to the loins," and at last so deep, that they "could not be passed over." Ezek. xlvii. 3, 4, 5.

Third. God doth hereby glorify his wisdom. — As God's wisdom is demonstrated in the world by the variety of creatures, which are not all of the same bulk and bigness, but some bigger and some less, so in the church of God his wisdom appears, that some Christians are of greater and some of a less measure of grace. Search the whole creation, and you shall find the wisdom of God in the variety of creatures. In the heavens there are the greater and less lights; and as stars of different magnitude do beautify and bespangle the heavens, so in the sea there are greater and less fishes; in the air, the great eagle and little sparrow; on the earth, the elephant and little dog; amongst the

creeping things, there is the great serpent and the little pismire; amongst the vegetables, the tall cedar and the hyssop on the wall; and also amongst the rational creatures, there is a giant and a dwarf, a grown man of a tall stature, and a child but of a span long; — so is God's wisdom greatly illustrated, that as there is variety of natural proportions in the world, so there are various proportions of grace in his church among his children.

Before I come to apply this point, which is of very great use to God's children, for their comfort, I shall lay down some general positions, about small measures of grace.

1. That in the church there are found more weak Christians than strong, — more young converts than old and grown Christians. As in a forest there are more young sprouts than old trees; in a garden more young slips than old roots; in the world more young children than old men. In Nineveh, there were 120,000 infants (Jon. iv. 11); but there was not such a number of old men. *By how much things are more perfect, by so much they are the fewer.* Look among other creatures: those that are of a bigger bulk are of a lesser number; as in the sea there are more young and little fish than great whales; on the earth, the smallest things are "innumerable" (Jer. xlvi. 23); in the air, there are more swarms of flies than flocks of birds; so in the church of God, there are more that are young and weak converts than old Christians. It is with most Christians as it was with Jonathan's signal arrows, which he shot to warn David by, of which two fell short, and but one beyond the mark (1 Sam. xx. 36); so where one Christian shoots home *to the mark of the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus*, there are many fall short!

2. That there are many that have but weak measures, and small beginnings of grace, who have been a long time under the profession of religio-

and under the means of grace. Such were the Hebrews, "who, for the time that they ought to be teachers, yet had need that one should teach them again which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat" (Heb. v. 12); and I may accommodate to this purpose that speech of Christ, "Many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first." Matt. xix. 30. There are many who went out early, and took, as it were, the first step in the profession of religion, and yet others have overgone them who went out after them;—many who have but weak measures of grace, have been of long standing under the means of grace; and, therefore, Christians are not to judge the strength of grace by their profession,—but by their proficiency: it is not How many years you have been professors?—but What experience and judgment have you gotten under ordinances?

3. That the smallest measures of grace cannot merit eternal life and glory, because great measures cannot.—In merit there ought to be a proportion; but between grace and glory there is none: God's compassions are our merits! Our services are imperfect, our salvation is perfect; our services but momentary, our glory is eternal. There is no comparison between our light duties and eternal weight of glory. God crowns not our merits, but his own gifts. The church, in the Canticles, is described according to the several parts of her body: "Her voice is sweet, her countenance comely, and her dove's eyes are beautiful. Behold, thou art fair, my love (saith Christ) thou hast dove's eyes, thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, and thy neck with chains of gold." Now it is very observable, that though Christ commends the Church's "eyes, her hair, her teeth, her lips and speech, her temples, her breasts, her neck," &c. (Cant. ii. 14; i. 10, 15; and iv. 1, 2, 3, 4, &c.) yet he doth not commend her hands;—to

shew, that though she be adorned with many graces, as with so many beautiful ornaments and comely lineaments, yet she merits nothing at the hands of Christ by all her doings. "The Church's beauty is perfect through the comeliness of Christ." Ezek. xvi. 14.

4. That believers ought not to rest satisfied with the small measures of grace they have received.—Though a little grace may bring you to Heaven, yet you are not to take up therewith; but if you have got a little grace, labour for more; and to quicken you hereunto, consider,

First, Small measures of grace are not so sensible and evidential to yourselves; — little things, because they are little, are not seen. There may be a little dust hovering up and down in the air; yet, because it is small, we see it not. This is the reason why Christians doubt; — grace is little, and, therefore, it is not discerned. Compare Matt. viii. 26 with Mark iv. 40, and we shall find that, in Matthew, Christ saith, in his reproof to his disciples, *O ye of little faith!* and in Mark, *How is it that ye have no faith?* You may, from the variety of these expressions, gather this: That a *little faith* unexercised, as to comfort, is as good as no faith: it was so little, it was as good as none, in that particular exigence they were in. You may have a little grace, and yet, as to comfort, that little and weak grace may not further thee in a way of strong consolation: not but that a weak Christian is accepted, and the weaker Christian may lie in his Father's bosom: yet it is the strength of grace that gives us strong consolation.

Second, Consider, that small measures of grace, though they may bring you to Heaven, yet they are not so useful to others. A weak Christian cannot do much good in Christian converse, because they want judgment and experience in the ways of God; and, therefore, such are not to be

received "to doubtful disputations" (Rom. xiv. 1, and xv. 1) but are to be borne withal. Gal. vi. 1. Spiritual and strong Christians are most useful. Young converts are not fit for some exercises about religion: they are not fit to strengthen others. "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke xxii. 32): it is not to be understood of his first conversion, but of his progress in religion; as if Christ had said, When thou art strengthened thyself, strengthen thy brethren. There are some duties which young converts are not fit for. "A piece of new cloth is not fit for an old garment; neither old bottles fit for new wine." Matt. ix. 16, 17. Pareus, and most expositors, refer that place to that case of conscience, *Why Christ's disciples did not fast often?* They were like old and weak bottles, and so were not fit for that strong duty, which was as new wine, and would be apt to break them. Christ said to his disciples, That he had many things to say unto them, which, in regard of their weakness, they were not then able to bear. John xvi. 12.

Thirdly, Nor are small measures of grace so honourable to God. God is glorified when his people "bear much fruit." John xv. 8. Much means, pains, and little fruit, is a shame to the vine-dresser; and, therefore, believers must not rest satisfied with small measures of grace.

Fourth, It is our duty to improve those small measures of grace which God hath given us; and consider, "he that is faithful in a little, God will make him ruler over much." Luke xix. 17. Use of grace will increase it; yet, if thy grace be increased, ascribe all to God, — it is God's *pound*, and not thy *pains* hath gained!

Use is of comfort to weak Christians, — to those young Abijahs in whom there is found but some little good. Let such know, to their comfort,

1, Though thy grace be but little in quantity, yet it is much in value. A pearl, though but little in substance, yet it is of great worth; so a little grace is of great value. *The heart of a wicked man is nothing worth*; — you may have much knowledge and seeming grace, but no true worth! A shop full of barrels will not make a man rich, unless those vessels be full of commodities. Gifts, as to Heaven, are but the lumber of a Christian, — it is grace that makes him rich towards God!

2. Though thy grace be little for the present, yet it will grow for the future to a greater measure. The little "grain of mustard-seed" (the least of seeds) will in time grow up to a tree. Mat. xiii. 31, 32. Grace is fitly compared "to leaven" (Mat. xiii. 33) which is of a spreading nature; to the "cloud" which the prophet's servant saw (1 Kings xviii. 44) and to "the waters of the sanctuary" (Ezek. xlvii. 3, 4) which did all increase. An infant of days shall proceed, by degrees, till he become like the *Ancient of Days*; *perfect as his Heavenly Father is perfect.* Naturalists observe, That the seeds of the cypress-tree are very small; and yet of them proceeds a very high tree. Such is the birth and growth of grace!

3. The little measure of grace once begun in the soul shall be perfected. "God will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, until judgment be perfected in victory." Mat. xii. 20. By *judgment* is meant there the work of *sanctification*, till that comes to be prevalent over corruption. Paul was confident "that he that had begun a good work in them, would finish it unto the day of Jesus Christ." Phil. i. 6. The Lord "is faithful, and will do it." 1 Thess. v. 24. God hath commanded us to "go on to perfection" (Heb. vi. 1); and he doth not command

impossibilities. God blames men of folly, in not proceeding "to finish when they have begun to build." Luke xiv. 28, 29. God will never begin to rear up a structure of grace, and never finish it. Besides, God hath promised "to perfect that which concerneth his servants." — Psalm cxxxviii. 8.

4. The weakest Christian hath grace alike for quality, though not for quantity; though thy grace be not so much, yet it is as true as others; though but a convert of yesterday, yet grace as true as of an old stander in religion. "Faith is alike precious" in all believers (2 Pet. i. 1) for quality, though not for quantity. Faith in all believers is alike,

1. In respect of the author, God.

2. The object it holds upon, the same Christ.

3. The means of working it are the same, viz. the Word and the Spirit. A little grace is true grace. Fire in the spark is as well fire as the flame, — the filings of gold are gold, as well as the whole wedge, — a drop of water is water, as well as the whole ocean. A little grace is true grace.

4. The end it hath, is the same salvation of soul. 1 Pet. i. 9.

5. God will not put your weak grace to trial beyond your strength. "God will debate with it in measure, — he will stay his rough wind in the day of his east wind." Isaiah xxvii. 8. Thou shalt not have such boisterous storms of temptation as a strong Christian. "God will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able." 1 Cor. x. 13. God will take care "that the spirit shall not fail." Isaiah lvii. 16.

6. Take this for your comfort: The least measure of grace is enough to bring you to Heaven. This is not spoken to make you idle; but only to comfort a perplexed conscience. Many, because

their grace is weak, they think they have no grace. "I have set before thee," saith Christ to the church of Philadelphia, "an open door; and no man can shut it, for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." Rev. iii. 8. It is true, our comfort lies much in the comparative degree; but our salvation in the positive degree. Strong grace hath strong comfort! Much faith will bring thee with much comfort to Heaven; but a little faith will bring thee safely to Heaven!

SERMON IV.

Preached at St. Lawrence Jewry, London, the same day, 1631.

The same Text.

BEFORE we come to the use of caution, I shall here state a case of conscience, which is this: — *That if, amongst God's people, there are some found that have but little grace, and but small measures found in them, then what is the least measure of grace, less than which a man cannot be said to be in the state of grace?*

This is a practical and useful case.

First. This is of great use to Christians, who are but of a lower form in religion, and have but little grace, yet they may know that little they have; and though they have not attained strength of grace, yet they may know the truth of grace in themselves: and although they come short of strong believers, yet they shall hereby know they go beyond the hypocrite; for the least measure of grace is better than the greatest measure of gifts.

Secondly, The knowledge of this will quicken the soul unto due endeavours after a further increase. This will teach them "to abound more and more." 1 Thes. iv. 1.

Now, that we may discover what is the lowest degree of true grace, we shall shew you it in some of these following particulars.

1. A light in the soul to see the evil and the mischievous nature of sin, though not an ability to mortify sin. — The entrance of God's word giveth light, "and giveth understanding to the simple" (Psalm cxix. 130); that is, the first work of the word upon the soul; the very beginning of

converting grace in the heart is light, whereby thou seest sin and its sinfulness: as it was in the first creation, the first thing that was created was light, — so in the second creation the first work is "to open the eyes of the blind, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Acts xxvi. 18. Upon the work of conversion in the soul, the first degree of grace is to be enlightened with the "light of the living" (Job xxxiii. 30); so that where this light is wanting, there cannot be a work of grace.

2. A settled and fixed purpose of heart to leave sin and to cleave unto God. Grace doth not consist so much in an actual mortifying of sin, as in an unfeigned and settled purpose of heart to leave every sin.

The prodigal's resolution to go to his father's house, argued some grace in him. "I will arise, and go to my father's house" (Luke xv. 17, 18); that is, I will leave my wicked company and courses; and, it is said, "his father saw him afar off, and ran and met him." Luke xv. 17, 18. — The Lord did work in him a purpose to leave his sin. Gregory, on this place, saith, *That remission of sin came to his heart before his confession brake out in his speech to his father.* So David: "I acknowledged my sin unto thee; and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said I will confess my transgression to the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Psalm xxxii. 5. Augustin observes on this place, That David *doth not say he did confess; but he purposed to confess his sin:* and yet this his purpose was true grace, though one of the least measures of grace. That holy purpose of David argued grace in him, when he said "I have purposed, and will not transgress thy law: I have sworn, and will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments." Psalm xvii. 3, and cxix. 106. It argues grace when a soul doth "cleave unto the Lord with full purpose of heart." Acts xi. 23.

3. Another low measure of grace is this: a sensible complaint of the want of grace. Thus he that came to Christ, and said with tears, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief" (Mark ix. 24) he had grace. He doth not say, Lord, help my faith, but *Lord, help my unbelief.* His expression about his unbelief did note not only his want, but his sensibleness of his want. This is that "poverty of spirit" (Mat. v. 3) which hath the first place in the beatitudes; this is the lowest round of the ladder. The apostle tells us, "that the Spirit helps our infirmities in sighs and groans that cannot be uttered." Rom. viii. 26.—Observe here, that it is not said the Spirit helps us with comforts and joys, but *with sighs and groans*; whence we may learn that the Spirit's help is as well *in sighs and groans*, and sensible complaints of our wants, as in holy ravishments. Strength of grace is seen in holy joys and ravishments, but truth of grace may be seen and discerned in sighs, groans, and complaints of our wants; they are said to be *sighs and groans that cannot be uttered*, not in regard of their greatness; but (as Master Perkins observes) in regard of their weakness; *God's children at first wanting ability to express their own thoughts.* To be sensible of the want of grace is grace; for nature cannot make a man duly sensible of the want of grace, nor sensibly to complain of that want.

4. Earnest desire after more grace, argues there is grace in the soul, though it be but small. I do not place the beginning of grace in an ability to exercise grace; but rather in an earnest desire after grace. Desire after grace, is accounted by God the grace itself we desire; for so we find that Nehemiah's desire to fear the Lord, "is counted for actual fearing God." Neh. i. 11, compared with v. 15. Desires are the seeds of grace, and the graces themselves are the blossoms and sweet fruit that spring from thence.

Grace exercised, is the fruit of a holy desire after grace!

That the desires after grace is in God's acceptation grace, may be thus demonstrated:—

1. God's people have appealed unto God concerning the uprightness of their hearts, merely by their desires; so saith the church:—"The desire of our soul is to thy name, and the remembrance of thee; and with my soul have I desired thee in the night." Isa. xxvi. 8, 9.

2. God hath made many gracious promises, not only to the acting and exercising of grace, but to the desires after grace. "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." Mat. v. 6. "If any man thirst," saith Christ, "let him come unto me and drink" (John vii. 37);—nay, there is a general and universal invitation "to every one that thirsteth, to come to the waters" (Isa. lv. 1); and God hath promised "to give to him that is athirst, of the fountain of the water of life freely." Rev. xxi. 6. The Lord hath also promised "to fulfil the desire of those that fear him, and will hear the desire of the humble." Psa. cxlv. 19. and x. 17. So that by these promises it doth appear, that hungering and thirsting, and desires after grace, are grace in God's account and acceptation.

Now, lest men should rest in lazy and sluggish desires, and thereby neglect the exercise of grace, I shall give you an account in what sense the Scripture reckons upon desires after grace to be grace.

1. They are supernatural desires. It is true, there are natural desires in the soul after that which is good,—it is the language of Nature, "Who will shew us any good?" Psa. iv. 6. Now these desires may and do arise from the motion of the natural and unsanctified will of man; and these desires are after happiness, and not after

holiness. Such were the desires of Balaam, who said, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Num. xxiii. 10. This was but a natural desire: but true desires in the soul are after Heaven, for holiness sake. Bernard notably sets out these desires of natural men, *That they have a desire of the end, but not of the means.*

2. Desires after grace are joined with holy *endeavours*; and therefore, the apostle joins "desire" and "zeal" together (2 Cor. vii. 11) to intimate that *true desires* are always joined with *zealous endeavours.* Thus the apostle also joineth a "readiness of will" and "performance" together." 2 Cor. viii. 11. God will never accept the *will* for the *deed,* unless there be an endeavour to perform what we say we are willing to do; and, therefore, Solomon rightly describes how pernicious desires are without endeavours. "The desires of the slothful," saith he, "kill him, because his hands refuse to labour." Prov. xxi. 25. Bernard describes this laziness to the life:—*Carnal men love to obtain, but love not to follow Christ: they will not endeavour to seek him whom they desire to find.*

3. Desires, which are true and gracious, are unsatisfiable. Thus David speaks of his desires:—"My soul," saith he, "breaketh for the longing it hath to thy judgments at all times Psa. cxix. 20); yea, he further describes the ardency and unsatiableness of his desires, by the "harts panting after the water-brooks." Psa. xlii. 1. The hart is naturally the most thirsty of all creatures; but this thirst is much increased when the poor beast is chaced with dogs. Even so the true desires of the soul after grace are earnest, ardent, and vehement desires.

4. You may know true desires after grace by their object. Desires are not gracious, if they be more after outward things than after God. So David: "My soul thirsteth after God, after the

living God. My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth after thee, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is." Thus his soul longed, "and did break" with longing after God's judgments. Psalm xlii. 2, lxiii. 1, and cxix. 20. Now, therefore, wouldst thou know whether thou hast any beginning of grace in thy soul, examine what thy desires are. Perhaps thou canst not pray, but thou desirest to pray: perhaps, thou canst not mourn for sin; but dost thou mourn that thou canst not mourn? — perhaps, thou dost not believe (as thou fearest); but dost thou desire to believe? — perhaps, thou canst not repent; but dost thou desire to repent, and dost thou labour to repent? then thou mayest conclude that thou hast some beginnings of true grace in thy soul.

5. We may know the truth of grace though it be little, by the earnest desire after the word and the means of grace. Thus Peter sets forth our desires, "as new born-babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." 1 Pet. ii. 2. There is in a child a natural instinct as soon as ever it is born, to desire after the mother's breast: the apostle makes it a resemblance of a spiritual man; a man spiritually new-born will desire after the word, the means of grace, that he may grow in grace.

6. An endeared love to those that have grace. "By this you know you are passed from death to life, because you love the brethren." 1 John iii. 14. Casuists upon this text say, That love to God's children is the first grace, and first appears in young converts. The natives in New England, it is observed upon their conversion (for God hath begun there to bring some of those poor creatures *from darkess to light, and from the power of Satan to himself*) the first appearance of grace in them, is in their love and respect to those that are truly gracious. Thus I have shewed you an answer to the question, What are the least

measures of grace? — without which, or some of them, a man cannot be said to have grace; and wheresoever any of these are, that man's condition is safe; and these little measures of grace will bring a man to Heaven.

I shall here lay down some cautions to prevent misapplication: —

The first caution is, Tho' these small measures of grace are saving, yet you must not content yourselves with them. Take heed, lest what I have said, for the support of the weaknes of some Christians, become not a pillow for the idleness of others; "but let us strive to go on unto perfection." Heb. vi. 1. We must not sit down with any measure of grace; and to persuade you hereunto.

1. Consider, That things merely necessary and sufficient to maintain a natural life, will not content a man. What man is content, though he hath clothes enough to hide his nakedness, and food enough to keep life and soul together? — for he desires not only clothes for nakedness, but ornament; and not only food for hunger and necessity, but delight. Now shall men be unbound after their desires for outward things, and shall they sit down and say they have enough for heavenly things?

2. Consider, If thou contentest thyself with a small measure of grace, though thou shalt have the fruit of thy grace when thou diest, yet thou wilt want the comfort of thy grace whilst thou livest. It is strength of grace that gives assurance; Weak grace will bring thy soul to Heaven; but it is the strength of grace will bring Heaven into thy soul. "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness shall be quietness and assurance for ever." Isa. xxxii. 17. A child of God hath seldom peace and comfort from the habit of righteousness, but from the exercise of righteousness. "He that lacketh these things," saith Peter, "is blind, and

cannot see afar off," &c. 2 Pet. i. 9, 10, 11. This is not spoken of wicked men who have no grace, but of such who have grace; and because they exercise it not, do not discern the comfortable fruits of grace in their souls. A little faith unexercised, is as to comfort (as we have shewed) as good as no faith." Mat. viii. 26 compared with Mark iv 40. They that add not to the stock of grace, will want the comfort of grace: so that a weak Christian (who is compared by Peter to a purblind man) "he cannot see" (because the eye-sight of his faith is weak) "afar off" (2 Pet i. 9.); he cannot see his name writ in Heaven; he will want the comfortable evidence of grace in his heart who contents himself with measures of grace.

The second caution is, Take not those things to be evidences of the *truth* of grace, which are evidences only of the *growth* and *strength* of grace. Weak converts do involve themselves in a labyrinth of misery, in judging themselves by those symptoms which are evidences only of the strength of grace. Thou must not judge thyself whether thou art in the state of grace by this; as whether thou hast ravishing joys and comforts of the Holy Ghost: these are things that God indulgeth unto some few, and those of a long standing in the school of Christ. In a school, a scholar must not compare himself with one of the highest form: if thou wouldst judge of the truth of thy grace, judge by the lowest measure. The reason why hypocrites and low-form Christians do mistake is this:—Hypocrites judge they have grace, because they have gifts; and weak Christians judge they have no grace, because they do not find such measures of grace in them as are in others. We do not use to say, It is not day because it is not noon. It is unthankfulness to God, and uncharitableness to ourselves, to argue a nullity of grace from the weakness of it; and

therefore, if thou canst say 'I see my grace,'—yet it is well if thou canst say 'Blessed be God, I see my sin;' if thou canst not say that thou leavest sin,—yet it is well if thou canst say, 'I have a full purpose of heart to do so;' if thou canst but cry out for the want of grace, yet comfort thyself, and do not conclude that thou hast no grace.

3. Do not conclude you have small measures of grace, because you have but small measures of comfort: this is the fault of young converts; they take measure of their grace by their comfort, which is a false and deceitful rule. Growth of grace is not to be measured by the working of joy,—the sweet blossom of joy may fall off, when the fruit of grace may come on; yea, sometimes Christians of the greatest measure of grace, may have the least measure of comfort; and all to let us know, that, as the being and exercise, so the comforts of our graces come from free grace. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who was anointed above his fellows, and was full of grace and truth; yet, in the time of his desertion was without comfort, when, by reason of the suspension of the favour of God his Father, he cried out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* — and so, sometimes, Christians that have but little measures of grace, may have much comfort; and this is the reason of that flash of joy that young converts have; it is God's indulgence towards them, to give them great joy at their first conversion; and, indeed, their joy at that time is the more taken notice of, because usually such have much trouble of mind when they pass through the pangs of the new birth; the change is then specifical, which afterwards is but gradual; and so, though they have afterwards more grace, more settled joys and comforts, yet, at their first conversion they may have more sense of their joys, though afterwards they may find an increase of grace, when joy may be as real, though not so sensible;

and, therefore, do not judge thy grace by thy comfort.

4. Do not conclude the measure of thy grace little, because thou hast but a little measure of gifts. Gifts are the issues of time and experience, and the fruits of studies advantaged by the strength of natural parts. A man may have a quick and pregnant invention, a profound judgment, a retentive memory, a clear elocution, and the like; and yet, none of these things can be arguments of grace; for all are but natural endowments. Gifts may be high, and grace may be low: thus it was with the church of Corinth; they were "enriched with utterance and knowledge" (1 Cor. i. 5, and v. 7); and they came behind other churches in no gift; and yet the apostle speaks of these very Corinthians that they were very low in grace, for so he taxeth them, 1 Cor. iii. 1, that "they were not spiritual, but carnal men, babes in Christ;" that by reason of their "envying, strife, and divisions, they were carnal, and walked as men" (1 Cor. iii. 2, 3): thus the church of "Laodicea was rich, and increased in gifts," and grew proud of it too, and yet for grace "was poor, and naked, and blind, and miserable" (Rev. iii. 17). It is with some professors as it was with a well read scholar, who having read many books of geography, and the description of places, can discourse of them very well; but if he were to travel those countries of which he hath so often read, he would soon be at a loss. So gifts may carry men far for matter of discourse about religion; but it is only grace that enables a man to practice religion. A child of God that hath but a little measure of gifts, may have for all that much grace. Of all the seven churches of Asia, it is said of *Philadelphia*, that "she had but a little strength" (Rev. iii. 8.); that is, but little strength of parts and gifts, and yet that church was very eminent for grace; for she with as much, if not more faithfulness than the other churches, *did keep the word of*

Christ's patience, and did not deny his name. Judge not, therefore, thy grace by thy gifts. It is good to "covet earnestly the best gifts;" but the way of true grace (though but weak) is "a more excellent way." 1 Cor. xii. 31.

I shall conclude this point with some further consolation to the people of God, that have but weak measures of grace.

Though thou art but weak in thyself, yet, thou hast much strength from without thee, or rather it is in thee, because of the Spirit of Christ that dwells in their hearts that do believe: the Devil doth all he can to make *a little faith fail*; but Christ prays "that it fails not" (Luke xxii. 32): great are the confederacies of the world, the flesh, and the Devil against thy little grace; but *be of good comfort*. "Ye are of God, little children," saith St. John, "and have overcome them; because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John iv. 4); and the weaker thou art, the more advantage hath God "to magnify the glory of his power in thy weakness." 2 Cor. xii. 9.

1. Comfort yourselves, ye weak Christians, for you have a strong God. "In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength" (Isaiah xxvi. 4). "Your God is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24). "He is able by his Almighty power, through faith, to keep you unto salvation." 1 Peter i. 5. You have a strong God, fear not; his power will be magnified in your weakness.

2. You have a strong Saviour, though your grace is weak, yet "he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him" (Hebrews vii. 25. *Eis to panteles*, *i. e.* perfectly and perpetually. It not only signifies perpetuity of time, but every kind of perfection. Camer. in Myr). Christ is the "wisdom and the power of God to those that are called" (1 Cor. i. 24); yea, he is

called a strong Redeemer: — *Our Redeemer is strong, the Lord of Hosts is his name.* Satan is, indeed, the prince of the power of the air; for so he is called, Ephes. ii. 2; — but Jesus Christ is truly the great power of God, who is able, because "stronger than the strong man armed, to bruise Satan under the feet of his saints." Rom. vi. 10.

3. You lie under a strong word, which is able to carry on the work of grace which is begun in you. The word of God, though "it be foolishness to them that perish (1 Cor. i. 18), yet it is the power of God to them that are saved" (Rom. i. 16); yea, it is an engine, "mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringeth into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. x. 4, 5); wherefore the apostle prays, "Now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance amongst all them which are sanctified" (Acts xx. 32); so that cheer up; though faith be weak, yet the word of God is strong; "it is that ingrafted word which is able to save your souls" (James i. 21): yea, in a word, "The word of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto all good works."— 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

4. You are weak, but you stand on a sure foundation. 1st, It is a foundation. 2dly, A sure foundation. 3dly, It is the foundation of God. And 4thly, It is the foundation of God that cannot shake, but standeth firm (2 Tim. ii. 19). — "Each of the words has weight. This assurance rests, firstly, On a foundation; secondly, Not any how, but firmly; thirdly, Not of man, but of God; fourthly, Not shaking, but fixed and sealed." Dr. Prideaux). Now the weak believer stands by the

immutable decree of God, which here the apostle calls the foundation of God.

5. Weak believers are assisted by a strong spirit. The Spirit of God is not only a "Spirit of grace and supplication" (Zech. xii. 10) but it is also a "spirit of power" (2 Tim. i. 7); — and, therefore, let weak believers cheer up themselves: though they have little grace, yet that little grace is upheld and maintained by the great power of God unto salvation. — In yourself you stand, and do not stand. Augustin.

2. The truth and essence of grace is not discerned so much by good acts as by good affections. "How fair is my love, my sister" (Cant. iv. 20) saith Christ to the Spouse. God reckons of our beauty by our love, and of our perfection by the sincerity of our affections. Natural abilities, to which formalists and hypocrites may come up, may and do resemble good actions; but they cannot come up to good affections. A painter may paint the colour of the face, but his art cannot give heat unto the picture. Good actions may give you the resemblance of a Christian; so what Jehu did, resembled a true reformer; — but they are good affections that do set out the life and heat of true grace. Judge thy grace, therefore, by thy affections, and take comfort in this: — Though thou art little and low in actions, yet thou art warm and working in thy affections.

3. The third and last comfort is this, That little grace shall be lasting grace. Adam had perfection, but had not perseverance; and thou (poor soul) hast imperfection of grace, but hast perseverance in grace. The most violent and impetuous flood of corruption shall not quench the least measure; the least spark of true grace, the most boisterous blast of temptation shall not extinguish this poor smoking flax; not one drop of this divine ointment shall be spilt as water upon the ground. Comets may blaze a while, and then they fall, — to shew

that it was a comet, and not a star. True stars do not, cannot fall. Oh! then, bless God, who, though, in his anger, "he breaks the nations like a potter's vessel with an iron mace" (Psalm ii. 9.) yet, such is his tenderness over weak believers, *he will not break the bruised reed*; and, though he put out the candle of the wicked, yet *he will not quench the smoking flax*. The seeming graces of hypocrites shall perish and come to nothing, when true grace shall hold out. The painted face decays soon, but the natural complexion lasts. A child of God may be tossed by reason of corruption and temptation in a troublesome sea; but that ship shall never be shipwrecked whereof Christ is the Pilot, the Scriptures the compass, the Promises the tacklings, Hope the anchor, Faith the cable, the Holy Ghost the winds, and Holy Affections the sails, which are filled thus with the gales of the Spirit, &c. "Fear not, therefore, little flock, for it is your Father's pleasure to give you a kingdom." Luke xii. 32.

SERMON V.

Preached at St. Lawrence Jury, London, March 23, 1651.

The same Text.

HAVING finished the former part of the doctrine about little measures of grace, I come now to the second part, which is this: — *That God doth exactly take notice, tenderly cherish, and graciously reward the least beginnings, and the smallest measures of grace in the hearts of his people.*

In the prosecution of which point, I shall proceed in this method:—

I. I shall prove the truth of it.

II. I will also endeavour to give you the grounds hereof, and then make the application.

First, That God doth thus cherish the small beginnings of grace will appear, if we consider,

1. These Scripture instances, Mat. xii. 20, *He will not quench the smoking flax*; that is, by the figure *Meiosis* (as I have shewn already) he will kindle it. *He will not break the bruised reed*; that is, he will strengthen it. God regards not the flame only, but the smoking of grace; not the ripe fruit, but the tender buds. Cant. ii. 13. Christ would have accepted of green figs of the fig-tree, though the time of ripe fruits was not yet come; so some expound the place, Mark xi. 13. Christ accepts not only "the honey," but "the honeycomb" too, Cant. v. 1; that is, say expositors, *not only the excellent services, but even the meaner services of his people.* God takes notice of the cries of our hearts (Exod. xiv. 15) even the desires of the humble (Psalm x. 17, and 1 Peter v. 6) even the most inward groanings of the soul; not a good word but God takes notice of it; nay, God

takes not only notice of the least good that is in his people, but he eyes also the common good that is in such as have no grace. Thus, when the young man came to Christ, though he had no true grace, yet it is said, "Jesus loved him (Mark x. 21); and he took notice of that discreet answer of that Scribe mentioned by St. Mark, and said unto him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of Heaven." Mark xii. 34.

2. The truth of this point may be made out by those sweet and gracious promises God hath made to grace, though weak. I will give you one instead of many, mentioned by the prophet Isaiah (xl. 11.): "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young."

3. By counsels that Christ giveth to us, how we ourselves should carry ourselves to those that are weak, viz. to use them with all tenderness. Now, if God would have others, then surely himself will deal with weak believers with much tenderness.

First, God would have the *strong* to bear with the *weak*, to bear with their infirmities, and not to please ourselves; and surely then God will bear with them, and forbear them. See Psalm ciii.

Second, We are to receive them into our fellowship. *Him that is weak in the faith receive you*; and surely God will not reject such out of communion with himself and Son.

Third, We must do nothing that will or may justly offend or grieve the weak. We must *not walk uncharitably,* and grieve *our brother with our meat.* We must not make him "stumble that is weak." 1 Cor. viii. 12, and Rom. xiv. 15, 21.

Fourth, We should "restore" a weak brother that is fallen, and put him in joint again, "with the spirit of meekness" (Gal. vi. 1): *you that are spi-*

ritual (that is, strong Christians) *help up such as are fallen, through weakness.*

Fifth, We must "strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees, and say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong." Isaiah xxxv. 3. We must "help to lift up hands that hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but rather that it be healed." Heb. xii. 12, 13. We must not be like the herd of deer, who push away from them the poor wounded deer; but we must endeavour the "healing of the wounded, and comfort the feeble-minded, and support the weak, be patient towards all men" (1 Thes. v. 14): — support the weak, *i. e.* set your shoulder to bear them up who would stand, but are weak (Beza). Hold them up as a crutch doth a body that is lame; help them to stand (*Antekesthai*, "properly striving and endeavouring, but not sufficiently able to bear, or having sufficient strength to assist." C. A. Lap.) who for weakness are like to fall. Let your charity help to hold them up, even as a beam holds up a house that is ready to fall. Now, if God enjoins us to have all this care of those that are weak in grace, to cherish, support, and comfort them, then surely the God of mercy and compassion will be very careful to cherish the smallest measures of grace in the weakest believers.

Why doth God cherish the least measures of grace in his people?

1. Because the least measure of grace is of a very great value; the least grace and least measure or degree of it, is the purchase of Christ's blood, and the merit of his great sufferings. The smallest part of a diamond is precious; pearls and precious stones are but little for quantity, but great for quality and esteem. The least degree of grace is the work of God, and God will not forsake his own work.

2. Little grace is of the same nature and excellency with the greatest degree of grace; for, as the

very filings of gold are of the same nature with gold, so the least measure of grace is grace. The faith of all believers is the same faith specifically, though not the same gradually; their "faith is in all alike precious" (2 Pet. i. 1) but not alike strong.

3. Because God is the Author of weak grace as well as of strong. Solomon gives a good rule why the rich should not slight the poor, "Because God is the Author and Maker of them both." Prov. xxii. 2. And God will not slight the poor in spirit, no more than those that are rich in grace; *for he is the Maker of them both.* It is an argument to us why we should not despise the poor, *because God made them;* and, therefore, surely much more because the Lord made the poor and weak Christian, *he will not despise, &c.*

Job saith, *He did not despise the cause of his man-servant or maid-servant;* and he gives a reason for it (xxxi. 15): *Did not he that made me in the womb, make him, and did not he fashion us in the womb?* which holds as a very firm argument why the rich should not despise the poor,—and so why the rich in grace should not despise those that are poor in grace, for God made and fashioned them both. Now what is a reason unto us, God, is also pleased to make a reason unto himself: *That he will not forsake what he hath formed;* for so the prophet Isaiah:—"The Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, for thou art mine:"—and again, "Thus saith the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, Fear not, O Jacob, my servant, and thou Jesurun, whom I have chosen" (Isaiah xliii. 1, and xliv. 2.); yea, though he be the *worm Jacob*, yet God that made him will not crush him, but cherish him. See a gracious promise made to those that have but little grace, upon this very ground, that God is the Author of that little grace:

"Thy people also shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hand, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time." Isaiah lx. 21, 22.

"The Lord will perfect his work that concerneth his people" (Psalm cxxxviii. 8); *i. e.* he will perfect and encourage the least beginnings of grace, because *grace is his work in his servants.* It is a very good argument in prayer, *O Lord, forsake not the work of thy hands!* — and though, in respect of outward things, God may destroy him whom his "hands have made and fashioned" (Job x. 8), yet it is otherwise in respect of grace. God will not destroy any measure of grace which is the work of his hands. Property is the ground of love, care, and tenderness; as a man will look to a weak child, because it is his child; and will repair a weak house, because it is the house wherein he dwells; and that is the third demonstration of God's tender care over his people, that the meanest measure of grace shall not be deserted or forsaken, because God is the Author of it.

A fourth reason may be drawn from the covenant of grace; the nature and tenor whereof is, to accept of sincerity instead of perfection, desires for deeds, purposes for performances, pence for pounds, and mites for millions; and, therefore, God will accept and reward the least measure of grace that is in truth and sincerity. God requires of Abraham, when he renewed with him the covenant of grace, "Be thou perfect" (*i. e.* upright) "and walk so before me, and I will be thy exceeding great reward." (Gen. xvii. 1, and xv. 1. It is said of perfect and immaculate victims.)

To make some application of this truth, we may from hence deduce these inferences follow-

ing:—If God doth cherish and will reward the smallest measures of grace,—

First, Then it will follow, *That God takes notice of the smallest sins to punish them.* He that graciously eyes the very buddings of grace, will also justly eye the buddings of corruption in his own people. Thus he was ready "to have slain Moses for his neglect of circumcising his son" (Exod. iv. 24); and thus the Lord made a breach upon Uzzah, when he put forth his hand, and stayed the shaking of the ark (2 Sam. vi. 7):—"You have I known" (saith God of his people) "only of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Amos iii. 2.

It is true, it is said "The Lord beholds not iniquity in Jacob, neither sees perverseness in Israel" (Num. xxiii. 21); but this is not, as the Antinomians gloss upon it, as if God did not see sin in his people, and is never displeased with their sins; but the meaning is, That God sees not sin in his people so as eternally to punish it; and, morever, the most proper sense of that place is this, That whereas Balak hired Balaam to curse the people of Israel, and that false prophet, for the wages of unrighteousness, was ready enough to have taken all occasions of cursing them; yet, he could not fasten any curse upon them at that time, because there was no provoking sin among them; and, therefore, he gave Balak counsel to tempt them to sin; and so, by the stumbling-block of the Midianitish women, he drew Israel to idolatry and adultery, and so made them fall. *Vide Gataker in loc.*—But, God doth see sin in his own people, yea the least sin; yea he eyes their very failings, though not to damn them for them, yet to chastise them for them. God sees the purposes of sin, as well as the purposes of grace. It is said of Balak, that he arose and warred against Israel. Now, we do not read that

ever Balak did actually wage war against Israel, only he did intend and purpose it (Josh. xxiv. 9.); and for that end *sent and called Balaam, the son of Beor, to curse them;* and yet the Holy Ghost reckons upon his wicked purpose as if he had accomplished it.

Second, Learn from hence, That the same mind should be in Christians of greater growth to the weak, as was in Christ Jesus; who, though he be higher than the highest, yet, he looks upon the poor and lowly without disdain; and so should we. "The Heaven is the throne, and the earth is the footstool of the Lord;" and yet this great God will not despise the weakest saint, but "will look even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at his word." Isaiah lxvi. 1, 2. He will look on the poor, weak, trembling soul; and shall we look off from such with pride and disdain, and set such at our footstool? shall Christ give the lamb in his escutcheon, and wilt thou give the lion? shall he, like a lamb, be meek and gentle, and thou, like the lion, be stout, haughty, and stately, that contemns all the beasts of the forest? O be not you supercilious and contemptuous towards weak Christians, who are injured and discouraged by strong Christians!

1. When they are put upon such austerities of religion as are far beyond their strength and growth,—when these poor, torn, tattered, and rent bottles are put upon to hold new wine (Matthew ix. 16, 17) alas, poor souls, they are discouraged; wherefore Christ proportions his doctrine to their capacities, and will not say that to them which they cannot at present bear; and so proportions out their duties to their abilities, and will not outmatch their strength with his commands. Fasting and suffering was a hard duty, and, therefore, he will excuse them till they have had more time and more experience in the ways of God, till the Holy Ghost come down upon them, and they have more

grace; which is a good rule for us not to discourage young beginners in the school of Christ, not to put them to read such authors as are above their capacities.

2. When strong Christians are too sharp and rigorous in bitter reproofs, for the failings and infirmities of weak Christians —Young converts, like young twigs must be gently handled, else you will break them; you must excuse their failings, hide their wants, commend their performance, cherish their forwardness, resolve their doubts, bear their burdens, and by this gentleness bring them into a love of religion, that they may not distaste it as soon as they know it.

3. By setting light by their gifts. Alas, how soon is the smoking flax quenched by the too much superciliousness of those that think themselves bright torches! how easily is the poor spark of grace trod out by the *foot of pride!*

4. By puzzling them with doubtful disputes, contrary to that of the apostle, "Him that is weak in the faith receive, but not unto doubtful disputations." Rom. xiv. 1.

5. By giving them ill example. Weak Christians are more apt to be led by example than by precept. When Peter, "who was a pillar in the church and a strong Christian, for fear of persecution, forsook the Gentiles, and separated and withdrew himself, then others of the Jews (which in all likelihood were weak Christians) dissembled also." Gal. ii. 12, 13. Thus Paul argues to abstain from giving ill example about the eating the *Idolothyta*: — *If any man see thee which hast knowledge, i. e. who art a strong Christian, sit at meat in the idols temple, shall not the conscience of him that is weak be emboldened to eat those things that are offered to idols?*

And, therefore, let Christians learn from God, to cherish the weak beginnings of grace in the people of God. "Look not unto me," saith the

Church, "because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me" (Cant. 1 6.); *i. e.* look not on me with a lofty and disdainful look, and with a coy countenance;—and then the Church adds, *My mother's children were angry with me*; that is, other congregations and people did disesteem and disdain me for my infirmity: but this should not be so among Christians, but the strong should cherish the weak. Angels despise not the poorest Christians, but do minister unto them. Heb. i. 14.

Third, Learn from hence, how God doth, by leisure and degrees, carry on in the hearts of his people the work of grace unto further perfection. Mushrooms, and such like worthless things, like Jonas's gourd, may spring up in one night; but things of most moment are of longest growth before they come to perfection. The elephant among the beasts,—and the oak amongst the trees,—and man amongst the rational creatures, are longest before they grow up to their full and perfect dimensions; and as it is in nature, so it is in grace,—there is a progress from less to greater: all this work is by degrees. The godly are called "Trees of Righteousness" (Isa. lxi. 3); and yet this is by degrees. There is first the budding forth of the earth, and then those things that are sown spring forth, &c. (v. 11); and, therefore, let young converts learn from hence not to be discouraged; God's works, both of nature and grace, are perfected by degrees.

1. Though God regards the least measures of grace, let not this make you regardless to grow in grace. In this first creation, God said to the creatures, "Increase and multiply;" and, by virtue of that word, the earth brings forth to this day. Now it is so in the new and second creation: the Lord expects that our grace should increase and multiply.

2. Though you have but a little grace, yet do not despise it, or disparage it. "Oh, do not de-

spise the day of small things in thy soul. Do not tread upon the bunch of grapes, upon the new wine in the cluster, but say, there is a blessing in it." Zech. iv. 6. Do not despise a little grain of mustard-seed; it will grow to a tree; true grace is a spark of Heaven, do not tread it out; despise not the least, and be not satisfied with the greatest measure of grace.

1. Let this comfort thy poor soul, O weak Christian, whose burden it is that thou hast much corruption and but little grace! God will look over a great deal of sin, and will take notice of the least grace. God will not, in refining his gold and silver, lose one dram of grace, though it lie among a heap of rubbish. Christ is said "to have his fan in his hand; he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into his garner." Mat. iii. 12. Now the use of a fan is to cast out the worst, and keep in the best; to drive away the chaff, and save the wheat; so Christ, though he purge out the chaff of corruption, yet he will save and preserve every grain of grace. It is otherwise with the devil's sieve; Christ tells Peter "that Satan desired to sift him." Luke xxii. 31. Now the use of the sieve is contrary to the fan, for that keeps the waste and lets out the best. The Devil doth all he can to destroy our grace, and to increase our sin; — but, 'tis otherwise; God will kill thy corruptions and cherish thy graces; and if the least grace be in thy soul, though with a mixture of much corruption, God will not despise it.

2. God carries the most tender regard to those that are weak in grace; the weak child is still carried in our arms, and the weakest of the flock the good shepherd will carry in his bosom. Isaiah xl. 11. Christ gave Peter charge in the first place, to feed his lambs. John xxi. 15.

1. God's care over weak Christians is such, that "he will not suffer them to be tempted above what

they are able, but with the temptation will make a way to escape, that they shall be able to bear it" (1 Cor. x. 13). God doth consider we are but dust; and the wise Physician of our souls will mercifully weigh every grain of every dose, and will not outmatch their strength whose strength is small.

2. God will not put them on difficult duties at the first. Christ taught his disciples such doctrines as their weakness could bear.

3. God will bear with their infirmities; he teacheth his children to go (Hos. xi. 1, 3); and holds them up by the arms.

SERMON VI.

Preached at St. Lawrence Jury, London, March 30, 1651.

2 Timothy ii. 1.

Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Having lately handled the doctrine of the small beginnings, and the least measures of true grace, and shewn you how God will accept and reward them, by opening to you that passage in 1 Kings xiv. 18, *concerning Jeroboam's son, in whom there was found some good*; and lest that doctrine should accidentally (through the corruption of our deceitful hearts) beget in us spiritual sloth, and satisfaction in weak degrees of grace, therefore, I shall prosecute my discourse concerning the degrees of grace; and shew you that, though God regards weak grace, yet we must all labour to obey this apostolical injunction, *To be strong in the grace of God, which is in Christ Jesus.*

In the whole verse you have three parts.

1. A loving compellation, *my son.*
2. A pressing exhortation, *be strong in grace.*
3. The reason of it, in the illative, *therefore.*

1. For the compellation. Quere, How *Timothy* could be *Paul's* son? for "his father was a Greek," and "Paul was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin." Acts xvi. 2, Phil. iii. 5, and 1 Tim. i. 2. *Timothy* then was not *Paul's* son *in the flesh, but in the faith.* Now,

A further question is, *Why is he called Paul's son?*

Baldwin gives this reason, *Because* (says he) Paul *begat him to the faith*; alleging that in

1 Cor. iv. 17, compared with v. 14, where Paul calls the Corinthians whom he had converted to the faith, his beloved sons; and so he calls Timothy, v. 17; but Timothy was not Paul's son in that sense: for as Estius shews, he was converted long before Paul knew him, by the godly instructions of his "grandmother Lois" and his "mother Eunice." 2 Tim. i. 5, and 2 Tim. iii. 15.

The true reasons why Paul called Timothy his son, were,

1. Because Paul was aged, and Timothy young; and it was usual for the old to call the younger *Sons.*

2. Because he confirmed him in the faith.

3. Because he loved him as a son; and Timothy loved Paul as a father.

4. Because, as a son with the father, he served Paul in the gospel. Phil. ii. 22.

Before I come to the main doctrines, let me observe something in the passage to it; upon these reasons Paul calls Timothy his son. From the compellation, *my son*, observe,

1. That ministers should use loving insinuations towards their hearers, to usher in useful instructions.

Soft words turn away wrath, and hard flints are broken upon soft pillows. This was Paul's practice here and elsewhere; he gained their affections,—the better to reform their judgments.

2. And then, in that he calls him *my son*, in relation to himself as a father, observe,

That religion puts men into the nearest union and the most endeared relations. They who are "glued together in the blood of Christ" (Salvian) are knit together in the strongest bonds.

Now from the reason of the duty, *therefore, my son*, &c. expositors do vary what this illative particle hath a reference to: some make it to refer to v. 7, of the foregoing chapter; and so Estius:

God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind; and, if so,

3. Then observe, That the receiving the first degrees of grace, should be a swaying reason to move us to grow in grace.

Others refer it to Paul's example (v. 8) or to the example of Onesiphorus (v. 16); from whence may be observed,

4. That the good example of good men should be an argument to us to increase in goodness.

If it refers to the 15th verse, *This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenies*; and thus Theodore refers it. Then observe,

5. That other mens' apostacy from the profession of grace, should make the godly more careful to grow strong in grace: but I shall handle the text without any relative considerations.

Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.— Timothy may be considered in a double capacity, either as a minister, or as a private Christian. *If as a minister*, then the force of the exhortation lies in this, That he should increase in ministerial *gifts and graces*; whence may be observed,

6. That ministers, of all men, should grow in the truth and in ministerial gifts; because, as they grow, so will the people grow under their ministry. Ministers do receive grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations. Rom. i. 5.

And grace is given unto them, that they may preach unto others the unsearchable riches of Christ. Eph. iii. 8.

7. If he be considered as a private Christian, then he is exhorted not to content himself with grace received, but to *labour after more strength of grace.*

Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.

Grace may be said to be in Christ two ways; either,

1. As the subject recipient of grace; or,

2. As a fountain redundant and overflowing to his people.

Grace is in Christ "in all fulness;" from whence his people receive "grace for grace." John i. 16.

There are two observations which I shall note from the words, considering the exhortation, without reference to what went before or follows after.

1. *That believers are not to rest satisfied in weak measures of grace already received; but to endeavour to attain greater strength of grace.*

2. *That Christ is the Subject in which all grace is, and the Fountain from which believers must receive all their grace.*

In the opening of the first doctrine, the first thing is to make it appear, *That believers must not rest satisfied with weak measures of grace received, but must labour after more grace*; — and this I shall prove,

1. By instances of two sorts: — 1. That believers have grown from weak grace to strong grace, "who, out of weakness, were made strong." Heb. xi. 34. There are expositors who refer this place to Hezekiah's recovery (1 Kings xx); but it may have a more general extent and application. The Psalmist, speaking of God's people, says he, "They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appears before God." Psalm lxxxiv. 7. It is true, the proper reference of these words is to the Jews going up to Jerusalem to worship, when the males went thrice a year up to Jerusalem to worship, according to the law (Exod. xxiii. 14, 17); yet Ainsworth understands it of our growth in grace; so we are said to be "changed from glory to glory" (2 Cor. iii. 18); that is, from little degrees of grace to greater; — *grace* is but *glory begun*, and *glory* is but *grace perfected*. True grace is still aspiring unto perfection; and,

therefore, says Paul, "If by any means I might attain the resurrection of the dead" (Phil. iii. 11): his meaning is, That I may attain that perfection of holiness which accompanies the state of the resurrection: a metonymy of the subject for the adjunct: he is still pressing forward that he might attain further degrees of grace; and, for that end, Paul, he *forgat what was behind, and reached forth to those things that were before* (v. 13); and tho' Paul (Eph. iii. 4) had very great knowledge in the mystery of Christ, yet he still desired to know more and more of Christ.

2. By instances, wherein God's people have prayed for the strength of grace.—"I bow my knees," says Paul, "unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant unto you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man" (Eph. iii. 16); and, speaking of the Romans (Rom. xv. 13, 14) says he, *I am persuaded you are full of goodness and knowledge*; yet because the best and most learned *know but in part, and see but darkly through a glass* (1 Cor. xiii. 12) he prays, That God would *fill them with all joy and peace in believing, that they might abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost*; so he prays "That their love might abound more and more in knowledge and in all judgment" (Phil. i. 9); "and that they might be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,—that they might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, and be fruitful in every good work, increasing in the knowledge of God." Col. i. 9, 10.—Thus God's people have prayed for a further increase in grace. Paul, after his conversion, increased more in strength, whereby he was enabled to confound the opposing Jews at Damascus. Acts ix. 22.

2. By commands, leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, we must "go on to per-

fection" (Heb. vi. 1); — we must "give diligence to add grace to grace" (2 Pet. i. 5); so we are commanded "to be strong in the Lord" (Eph. vi. 10.) "to stand fast in the faith, to quit ourselves like men and be strong" (1 Cor. xvi. 13) "and to abound more and more. 1 Thes. iv. 1; and 1 Cor. xv. 58. Many such commands are scattered up and down the Scripture; which shews our duty *to grow more and more,* and to attain unto greater measures of grace.

3. By promises, that God's people shall do so. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. iv. 18); that is, they shall increase more and more in strength. "God's gentleness makes his people great, and enlargeth their steps under them." Psalm xviii. 35, 36. The feeble among them at that day shall be as David, *and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them.* Pareus, in his short notes, which he calls his *Adversaria,* saith, *He that is weak in faith shall be as David, strong in faith.*

Why should believers not rest satisfied with the first beginnings of grace, but labour to be grown and strong Christians?

The reasons may be drawn, — 1. Partly from the necessity of it, *why you must do it* ; — and, 2. From the danger, *if you do it not.*

1. From the necessity of it, there are these reasons: —

1. If you consider the strong temptations you are like to meet withal from the Devil. We are, therefore, commanded to "be strong in the Lord, — to put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil; for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, and against the rulers of the darkness of this world." Eph. vi. 10, 11, 12. Now shall the Devil be strong and armed, and shall we be content to be unarmed,

and weak Christians? It is worth your noting in the epistle of John: says he, "I write unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one:" but when he writes to children, he says, "I write unto you, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake" (1 John ii. 12, 14); intimating, that though weak grace be sufficient to evidence to us the pardon of sin, yet it is strong grace which is able to overcome the temptations of the Devil. The Devil shall not overcome the weakest measure of grace; but the stronger our grace is, the more able we are to resist and overcome the enemy of our salvation. The Devil is called *A roaring Lion,*—whom we must resist steadfast in the faith. 1 Pet. v. 8, 9. It is not weak faith which is able to grapple with the Devil, therefore, ought we to be grown and strong Christians.

2. If we consider the strong opposition we are like to meet with from the world, we may be put upon it as Paul, "to fight with beasts." 1 Cor. xv. 32. Such manner of unreasonable men we may meet withal; and, therefore, we are commanded "to watch and to stand fast in the faith, to quit ourselves like men, and be strong" (1 Cor. xvi. 13); and the reason is given in v. 9. There are many adversaries we are like to meet with; and, therefore, we had need to pray with the Psalmist, "To be strengthened and saved by the right hand of the Lord." Psalm cxxxviii. 3, 7. Weak faith: it is not fit to be in a crowd of opposition; and, therefore, we should labour to grow strong in the grace of God.

We have many strong corruptions in our hearts, which weak grace will never be able to mortify,—strong passions, strong lusts; and how shall weak grace be able to grapple with, and have a conquest over these? If thy graces are weak when thy corruptions are strong, thou wilt be miserably foiled

by thy corruptions; therefore, pray for strengthening and assisting grace, whereby thou mayest be able, not only to resist, but to subdue and mortify the strongest lusts and passions in thy heart.

Another ground of the doctrine is taken from the danger, *if you grow not strong in grace.* As,

1. Others that made profession of religion after you, in time, will go before you in measures and degrees of grace: so it is said, "That many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first." Matt. xix. 30, compared with xx. 12, 16. Those who were first in the profession of the gospel, shall be last in the degrees and measures of grace; because they have not improved grace to a further increase of it.

2. If thou dost not grow strong in grace thou wilt be sure to decay, and to grow weaker; for *not to go forward* in grace *is to go backward.* Grace may be lost in some degree, — as to its exercise and comfort, though not to its being; and, therefore, says the apostle, "If these things be in you and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful." 2 Pet. i. 8; and Rev. iii. 2; intimating, that you will be barren if you do not add grace to grace. Weak things, if they be not watched over and strengthened, will be ready to die.

3. Though thou canst not lose the being of thy grace, yet thou wilt lose the comfort of it; and thou mayest be in as much trouble and perplexity as if thou hadst no grace at all. It is true, weak grace will bring thy soul to Heaven; but it is only strong grace which will bring Heaven into thy soul. Little grace is like a little mote, which is not seen because it is little. Little grace is as it were no grace; as that man in the gospel, he calls his faith *unbelief.* *Lord*, says he, *help my unbelief.* Weakness of grace makes mens' persuasions of God's love to be presumption, their zeal to be

lukewarmness, their grace to be but gifts, and (as here) their faith to be but unbelief. It is strong grace that gives gladness of heart, and hope in God; therefore, says Jeremiah, "my strength and my hope is perished from the Lord." Lam. iii. 18. When strength in grace decays, their hope and comfort decay also. It is the apostle's prayer in the inscription of many of his epistles, *that grace and peace may be multiplied.* If, therefore, you do not increase your graces, you will neither increase nor keep your comforts. "He that lacketh these things is blind," says the apostle Peter, "and he cannot see afar off" (2 Pet. i. 9); it is not meant of a total lack of grace (as hath been shewn); for, as after it is expressed, he is purged from his old sins, though he forgets it, having lost the sense of pardon for want of adding grace to grace.

4. Weak grace, under great trials, will expose a man to doubts and falls, as if he had no grace at all; little grace will keep a man in small trials, but not in greater. Little grace as to the strait a man may be in, may be as good as no grace; and therefore when the disciples were at sea, and "a great tempest arose, insomuch that they were afraid," — that which in Matthew is said to be "little," in Mark is said to be "no faith." Mat. viii. 26, compared with Mark iv. 40;—intimating, that as to that particular exigency and strait they were in, their little faith did stand them in no more stead than if they had had no faith at all. So Peter, Christ calls him *Oligopistos* (Mat. xiv. 31); because, though he began to walk upon the waves, but (v. 29) *when the wind grew boisterous, he was afraid, and began to sink.* Peter did not sink into the sea before his faith began to sink in his soul. He that faints in the day of adversity, it argues that his strength is small: so saith Solomon. Prov. xxiv. 10.

I shall now proceed to a second particular; and

that is, to give some Scripture notes of that man who is grown in grace; but let me shut up this sermon with a sharp and just reproof of many professors in our time, who go from one ordinance to another, and yet make little progress or increase in religion. They may be fitly compared to a company of ants, who are very busy about a mole-hill, and run to and fro, but never grow great; even so we have many Christians,—they run from one church to another, from one preacher to another, and it may be from one opinion to another, — but never grow up in true grace, and in the true knowledge of Jesus Christ: but I shall meet with such people hereafter in this discourse.

SERMON VII.

Preached at St. Lawrence Jewry, London, the same day, 1651.

The same Text.

HAVING, in the former sermon, observed, from this apostolical injunction to Timothy, which is obligatory to all Christians,

That it is the duty of all believers not to rest satisfied in weak measures of grace which they have received, but they are to endeavour to attain unto greater strength of grace.

This point we have proved, both by Scripture-instances, as also by several reasons. Now I proceed to answer this question, *viz.*

What are the notes the Scripture lays down of strong and grown Christians?

We are to know there are marks in Scripture, both of the truth of grace, as also of the strength of grace; and these must not be confounded, but distinctly considered. Our present question is about marks of growth in grace.

1. Such as are grown in grace, do ordinarily enjoy a grounded assurance and comfortable manifestation of the love of God in Christ to their souls. St. John saith, "Perfect love casteth out fear." (1 John iv. 18.—Fear is not so driven away as not to provoke our attention, but is so driven away as not to disturb nor hinder our peace. Calvin.) The more perfect love is, the less tormenting fear is in the soul; and the reason of our fear and doubting is for want of love. We cannot comprehend the great love of God in Christ to our souls, till *we are strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man*; which you will see in the apostle's prayer for the Ephesians (iii. 16—18) "That God would grant unto them according to

the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit, — that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith, and that they might be rooted and grounded in love, — and that they might be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ," &c. So that the more strength of grace is in the soul, the clearer is our comprehension of Christ's love to the soul.

2. Strong and grown Christians are able experimentally to "comfort others with the same comfort wherewith they themselves are comforted of God" (2 Cor. i. 4); and when they are "converted, they are able to strengthen their brethren" (Luke xxii. 32) as Christ speaks to Peter. By conversion in that place is not meant the first work of grace wrought in the soul; for that was wrought in Peter before his fall; but the meaning is, Peter, when thou art *strengthened and recovered* from thy fall, — when thou hast *recovered strength* again, then see that thou be careful to strengthen others, who, perhaps, may fall into the same weakness with thyself. "If any man be overtaken with a fault," saith Paul to the Galatians (vi. 1) "you that are spiritual, restore such a man in the spirit of meekness." You that are spiritual, *i. e.* you that are grown and experienced Christians, see that ye do endeavour to recover such a fallen brother. Paul prays for the Philippians (i. 9) "That their love may abound yet more and more in all knowledge and judgment;" that is, that they might have knowledge with judgment and experience, so that they might use their judicious knowledge in love for the edification of others that were but weak in grace; and, in the epistle to the Romans, the same apostle lays down this character of a strong Christian: — "I am persuaded of you, my brethren, that you are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to

admonish one another" (Rom. xv. 14); from whence we may gather the character mentioned, that the more perfect any Christian is in knowledge, or any other grace, the more able he is to admonish others for their edification.

3. Grown Christians are such as understand the great and profound mysteries of religion: they are not only such as use *milk*, and understand only the first and plain principles, such as the apostle calls "Babes, and unskilful in the words of righteousness" (Heb. v. 13, 14); but they are such as are able to digest strong meat; *i. e.* the deep mysteries of the gospel they do, in some measure, understand, and have their *senses exercised to discern both good and evil*; that is, to judge between true doctrine and false. Strong and grown Christians have such an "ear as is able to try words (as it is in Job xxxiv. 3, and xii. 11.) even as the mouth trieth meats." (*Ous* and *nous*,—as the mouth food, so the mind words.) It is an observation of the learned Mercer, that the same word in Hebrew, which signifies *An Ear*, in the dual number, signifies *A Pair of Balances*; to note thus much, that an experienced and judicious Christian will weigh whatsoever he heareth, before he believeth it; for, as the tongue of the balance standeth as a judge between the two scales, so should the heart of every man weigh what he hears; and so will every grown and judicious Christian. He will not take up truth upon trust; but he considereth first, and believeth afterwards. Nor will a grown Christian take up with inferior knowledge; but will, like a grown scholar, be searching after the deep things of God.

4. A grown, experienced, and strong Christian is most conversant and employed in the most strict and severe exercises of religion, which tend most to mortification. Weak Christians are all for easy and ordinary exercises, as hearing and

reading good books; but a strong Christian is much in spiritual watchfulness, secret prayer, frequent fasting (Luke v. 33, 34, 35, &c.) self-denial, and heavenly meditation, and such like duties as have a special influence upon the mortification of sin and corruption. A child, whose parts and strength are weak, is not conversant about such arduous and great undertakings as a grown man.

5. He can believe the accomplishment of promises and Scripture-prophecies, though God's providence seems to make against them, and tho' there seem no outward probabilities for them. Thus it argueth, "Abraham *was strong in faith,* who against hope believed in hope; and being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead." Rom. iv. 18, 19, 20. There were several things that might have staggered Abraham's faith, had it not been very strong.

1. There were fifteen years at least between the making of the promise of giving him a son, and the fulfilling of it.

2. Abraham was about an hundred years old before he had a son, and so unlikely to have children.

3. Sarah's womb dead, and no ordinary hope of procreation. Compare Gen. xv. 1, with chap. xvi. 16, and with chap. xxi. 5.

4. After the promised son was born, God calls upon Abraham to offer him up; and yet, notwithstanding all this, "he staggered not at the promise of God, through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and was fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was able also to perform. Rom. iv. 20, 21.

6. A strong believer can suffer as well as do for the sake of Christ. Greater strength of grace is required to suffer for the truth than to profess the truth; and, therefore, our Saviour propounds this to the ambitious suitors, the sons of Zebedee: "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall

drink of? — and to be baptized with the baptism wherewith I am baptized withal?" Matt. xx. 22, 23: implying thus much, that they did not well understand their own strength, that there was more grace required to suffer for the name of Christ than to believe on the name of Christ; and accordingly as is our strength of grace, so is our courage for the cause of Christ less or more. Nicodemus, when he had but little grace, he came to Jesus; "but yet in the night" (John iii. 2) by stealth: he durst not openly appear for Christ; but afterwards, as he grew in grace and the knowledge of Christ, so he grew in courage for Christ; and when the cause of Christ was debated in the assembly of the chief priests and Pharisees, there Nicodemus boldly pleads the cause of Christ: — "Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doth?" John vii. 51. Nay, we read afterwards of a higher resolution of this once fearful Nicodemus, when Christ was crucified and at the lowest. We find that Nicodemus, "which," saith the text, "came at first to Jesus by night, brought a hundred pound weight of mixture of myrrh and aloes for the burial of Christ." John xix. 39. The like instance we have in Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Christ but secretly, for fear of the Jews (John xix. 38); but afterwards, when he had got more strength of grace, the Scripture tells us he "went unto Pilate boldly, and craved the body of Jesus." Mark xv. 43. — To profess Christ boldly, in a time when dangers snd difficulties attend their profession, argues a strong faith. A weakly constitution dare not go out unless the weather be fair; but a strong body can endure the hardest weather. A weak and young convert is fittest to live in the prosperity of the gospel; but an old experienced Christian, like an old tried soldier, will not shrink in the hardest trials.

"If thou faint in the day of adversity, it is because thy strength is small." Prov. 24. 10.

7. He is one that is able to govern his tongue, that though passion be in the heart, yet, through the strength of his grace, he bridles it in, and restrains it, so as it shall not break into open railings, revilings, and clamours, as others do. St. James gives this character of a strong Christian: "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man" (Jam. iii. 2); not legally, but evangelically: he is a perfect man, *i. e.* he is grown strong in the grace of God.

8. He is one that dares trust God's providence for outward things, however he is in straits. As it argues littleness of faith to distrust Christ for food and raiment (Mat. vi. 25, 30) so it argues strength of faith, that, though the vision tarry, and no deliverance appear, yet then to live by faith (Hab. ii. 4) as the just are said to do, this argues strength of faith.

9. He is one that labours for unity in the church, as well as purity in the church. He will labour to his power, that Christ's coat shall be without rent, as well as without spot. This character I gather from that exhortation of the apostle: "Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, — let us mind the same thing." Phil. iii. 15. It is a note thou art weak, when thou makest a stir in the church about thy opinions; weak children are most forward. When children are weak and sickly, nothing will please them; so it is with some weak ones in the church, — their humour is such, you know not how to please them; but an experienced Christian is sober and wise, and very earnest to preserve unity in the church of Christ.

Before I proceed to speak any more about strength

of grace, I shall make some application of what I have delivered about the marks and signs of strong grace; and the use I shall make, shall be to give you some cautions about those foregoing characters; and there is need of a twofold caution.

1. Take heed you do not imagine yourselves strong in grace when you are weak, — this is a dangerous mistake.

2. Take heed of thinking and judging yourselves weak in grace when you are strong in grace: this is an uncomfortable mistake. "There is a man," saith Solomon, "that maketh himself rich, and hath nothing; and there is a man that maketh himself poor, and yet hath great riches." Prov. xiii. 7. I would, therefore, caution you that you may neither live above nor beneath what you have, — that you may not proudly fancy you have what you have not, nor discouragedly fear you want what you indeed have.

1. You are not to measure the strength of grace by the length of your profession. Many, who are long standers in the profession of religion, are but slow walkers in the ways and practice of religion: the soul's proficiency in grace is not the issue of length of time, but the fruit of free grace. There were those in the church for so long a time, that they "ought to have been teachers of others" (Heb. v. 12); but they had attained but little growth or strength of grace. They that came at the eleventh hour had their penny as well as those that came early into the vineyard. Matt. xx. 9. The scope of which parable is (as some interpreters say) to shew that those who come late to the profession of religion, may yet outgo many in gifts and graces, who have been long before them in profession. How many amongst us, their years speak them eighty, but their knowledge and grace not eighteen!

2. Measure not the strength of grace by the strength of your affections to some of the ways of God. The love of a newly-married couple may be

more fond at first; afterwards, it is more solid. Women, who are the weaker vessels, are usually more affectionate. Weak Christians are usually most affectionate. When the cripple was cured, we read that, upon the first cure, he leaped for joy (Acts xiv. 10): it is likely he did not continue to do so. The newness of the change did much affect him; and so it doth young converts.

3. *Measure not the strength of grace by the abundance of the means of grace which you enjoy.* Alas! Laodicea had a glorious light shining amidst her: she was one of the *seven candlesticks;* and because she had such means of grace, she mistook herself, saying, 'I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.' "But," said Christ, "Thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Rev. iii. 17.

4. *Measure not the strength of grace by the strength of your gifts.* There is a new disease amongst children, called *The Rickets*; when children grow big in the head, but weak in their limbs. This disease is spiritually upon the souls of many of our professors: their heads grow in respect of gifts and knowledge; but they do not grow strong to walk in the ways of God: they are like the moon, increasing in light, but not in heat. In the days of the schoolmen, the gifts of men were very high, and yet the power of godliness was at a low ebb in those days. There were in those times many sublime notions, seraphical speculations, curious distinctions, subtle objections, and elaborate answers to them, grave and weighty sentences; but, alas! but a little of the power of grace in the hearts of those men and them they taught!

2. Caution is, to prevent mistakes of those who are apt to judge themselves weak in grace, when, indeed, they are strong in grace.

1. Because thou hast not perfection of grace, do not therefore conclude thou hast not strength of

grace. Truth of grace is one thing, and strength of grace is another; so strength of grace is one thing, and perfection of grace is another. You must stay for perfection till you come to Heaven: it is "there *only* where the spirits of just men are made perfect." Heb. xii. 23. It is a witty observation that one hath: 'In grammar,' saith he, 'the present tense is accompanied with the preter-imperfect tense; but the future with the preter-pluperfect tense.' Even such is our present state of grace, it is accompanied with imperfections; but our future shall be more than perfect: — "There is no perfection here. There is not a just man on earth that doth good, and sinneth not" (Eccl. vii. 20) saith Solomon. "Who can say, I have made my heart clean?" Prov. xx. 9. "If I wash my hands with snow-water," saith Job, "and make myself ever so clean; yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me" (Job ix. 31); *i. e.* though I have by regeneration some grace, yet all my defilements shall never, in this life, be put away. In the prophecy of Zechariah we have the Lord speaking thus: "I will refine them as silver, and will try them as gold is tried" (Zec. xiii. 9); and yet, in the prophet Isaiah, God saith, "I have refined thee, but not with silver." Isa. xlviii. 10. — To reconcile both places, the meaning is, that tho' God begin to refine his people, yet they are not perfectly refined.

2. Do not judge thyself weak in grace, because thou hast not strong affections. God doth make up, in the experience of old and grown Christians, what is wanting of the great affections that they had at their first conversion. Holy Greenham often prayed that he might keep up his young zeal with his old discretion. What is wanting in affections, God makes up to thee in solidity of judgment, clearness of knowledge, abundance of experience, and stableness in the faith.

3. Judge not the strength of thy graee by the strength of thy comforts; — the fruit may grow strong when the blossom is off. I have spoken of this before; and, therefore, will only add this, That heavenly joys and raptures are very sparingly found amongst God's people. They are God's special indulgences to some of his special children. I will conclude with a saying of that godly and learned Scotchman, Mr. Rollock: — *Whilst I live,* saith he, *I never expect to see perfect reformation in the church, nor feel perfect ravishing joys in my heart.*

SERMON VIII.

Preached at St. Lawrence Jury, London, April 6, 1651.

The same Text.

I PROCEED now to answer some cases of conscience, which may be deduced from the doctrine I have laid down.

1. *Whether strong temptations may be consistent with strong grace?* This is a needful and practical case, because the people of God, when tempted by the Devil, they do not only question the strength but the truth of their grace.

Before I resolve this case, I shall premise these general positions:—

1. It is certain, where there is truth of grace, there may be strong temptations from the Devil. The Devil is like a thief which robs, not out-houses, where there is nothing but dung and straw, but the cabinets that are in the closet: so this great thief of the world, he is not so eager to rob and spoil the out-houses (wicked and ungodly men) but those who have the riches of grace in the cabinets of their hearts, these he labours to rob and spoil; or as a pirate, who sets not upon an empty vessel, but upon a ship laden with rich merchandize; those who are fraught with the rich gifts of grace, the Devil, by his temptations, will labour to make prize of for himself.

2. Let the temptations of the Devil be ever so strong, yet they shall not be above the strength of grace which believers have received from God. "God is faithful; who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able. 1 Cor. x. 13. He will proportion the burden to the back, and the stroke to the strength of him who is to bear it: if

temptations increase, our strength shall also increase, whereby we may be able to grapple with them.

3. It is evident, that the temptations of the Devil are always ordinarily most strong, after God's people have discharged some extraordinary duties to God, or have received most discoveries of grace from God. In both these cases the Devil's temptations are usually great. You find that immediately after the celebration of the Lord's Supper "the Devil desired to winnow the disciples" (Luke xxii. 32); after they had performed that extraordinary service to God, the Devil was desirous presently to set upon them. So you find that, after Christ had, in an extraordinary manner, *fasted forty days and forty nights*, he was immediately after tempted of the Devil; and so also after his baptism, "no sooner was he out of the water of baptism, but he was in the fire of temptation." (Dr. Hall's observations.) The Israel of God can be no sooner out of Egypt, but this hellish Pharaoh pursues them; and Hezekiah had no sooner kept the solemn passover, but Sennacherib comes up against him. All this is to shew us, that after we have put forth most grace in a duty, then the Devil will labour to play his after-game with us, if he miss of his fore-game: if Satan cannot keep us from duty and from enlargement in duty, he will fly-blow our duties by pride, and so mar them; and then after we have received the most especial manifestations from God's love and favour in Christ, then may we expect to be assaulted by the Devil: — thus Paul, after he had *those heavenly raptures, and abundance of revelations*, the Devil set upon him with vile temptations; — he had the "messenger of Satan to buffet him, a thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. xii. 7); which is not to be meant of any disease, but of some sharp temptation from the Devil. So you find that immediately after that voice to Christ, "This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well

pleased" (Mat. iii. 17), that then the tempter came to him. Hence you may gather from that connection between those two petitions in the Lord's Prayer, *forgive us our trespasses, and lead us not into temptation*; — to note to us, that no sooner can we get the evidence of our pardon, but we may expect to be tempted of the Devil.

4. That men who have the greatest strength of grace, are like to meet with the fiercest assaults and the strongest temptations from the Devil;—and this brings me to answer the case, *that strength of grace may be consistent with strong temptations.* To clear and confirm this, there are these two particulars to be enquired into,—

1. When temptations may be said to be strong?

2. How and why such strong temptations may be consistent with strong grace?

1. *When may temptations be said to be strong?*

1. Then may temptations be said to be strong, when the solicitations of the Devil to sin are urgent with the soul; when they are not weak and faint suggestions, but violent assaults, which will not be removed until assented to; when the Devil haunts a man so that he will not let him alone, then may they be said to be strong. Thus it is said, "Satan stood up against Israel" (1 Chron. xxi. 1); *i. e.* he set himself to tempt David, *and provoked him*; *i. e.* he would not let him alone, but haunted him with hellish importunity *till he had numbered the people.*

2. When they are frequent and continued. — Small temptations often suggested, become strong. Small drops of water, by frequent falling, make hollow the hard stone; which a few great and forcible blows will not do: so temptations, though but to small sins, if they be continued, may have greater entrance into the heart than a violent assault may.

3. When they are suited by the Devil to a man's disposition or present condition; so was that temp-

tation by which the Devil set upon Christ, after he had fasted forty days and forty nights. "Command (says he) that these stones be made bread." Mat. iv. 3. It was suited to his present condition; meat for his hunger. If you offer meat to a naked man he values it not, or clothes to a hungry man, because it is not suited to his present exigence: — but if the gift you offer be suited to the man's necessity, clothes to him that is naked, and meat to him that is hungry, then it becomes acceptable. The Devil doth not cast temptations at random; he is more subtle than to row against wind and tide; he knows which way the stream of our affections and dispositions runs, and he suits his baits accordingly. "Every man (says the apostle) is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed." James i. 14. It is a metaphor taken from fishermen who have this skill, that "according to the nature of the fish, so will they suit their bait" (Beza); whereby they lie in wait to deceive either the sight or the taste of the poor fish. The Devil is the great fisher of souls, and makes use of such temptations which are most likely to take; he observes to what sins a man's relations, calling, or opportunities lay him most open and obnoxious, and accordingly he lays his snare, and spreads his net. Though it is true that every man hath a principle within him suited to every sin, yet, it is true that every man is not equally active for, or disposed unto, every sin. The Devil sees what sin is most predominant in man, and so he frameth a temptation suitable; he sets a wedge of gold before a covetous Achan; Cozby an harlot, before an adulterous Zimri; a fair preferment before an ambitious Absalom; he knows well that a fit object presented is a victory half obtained. In these three cases, temptations may be said to be strong.

2. *How doth it appear that temptations so urgent, so continued, and so suited, may be consistent with strong grace?*

1. By instances; whereby it appears the best of God's children have been most tempted. Job, a holy man, yet, with what strong temptations was he assaulted! The Devil impoverished him in his estate, and so would tempt him to distrust God's providence; took away the lives of all his children, to make him question providence; tormented him with grievous diseases, to make him clamour against providence; and, above all this, tempted him "to curse God and die" (Job ii. 8) by the instigation of his wife; and yet though Job was thus haunted by the Devil, he was a believer strong in grace, and the most eminent saint in that age and that part of the world at that time, as God himself testifies of him, *That there was none like him upon earth: a perfect and an upright man.* He was not only for riches the greatest of all the men of the east, but for holiness the greatest upon the earth; yet thus was he afflicted and assaulted by the Devil.

Another instance there is of David, an eminent believer; and hath this commendation, *That he was a man after God's own heart*, and yet how furiously was he tempted by the Devil! One while Satan moved him to number the people,—another time to defile another man's wife,—another time to counterfeit himself mad before Achish king of Gath,—another time to judge all his holy duties to be in vain,—and at another time to question the faithfulness of God in his promise to make him king: *he said in his haste that all men were liars*, even Samuel the prophet also! Thus Peter, an eminent apostle of Christ, after he had made such a glorious confession of his faith, and had discovered more grace than in all his life-time before, you find him suddenly after, by an instigation from the Devil, beginning to rebuke Christ, and counselling him to spare himself (Mat. xvi. 16, 17, compared with 22, 23);—and thus Paul, that had such high and heavenly raptures, such divine

extacies, yet he had the messenger of Satan to buffet him; — but, above all instances, you have Jesus Christ, who, though he had perfect grace, and was full of grace and truth, yet this could not exempt him from the temptations of the Devil: He was full of the Holy Ghost, yet *was he forty days tempted of the Devil*, and that with strong temptations, if you but consider their continuance, their urgency, one after another, and their suitability to that of his present condition; so that it is plainly manifest, that strong temptations may be consistent with strength of grace by these instances given.

2. It appears also by reasons drawn,

1. From God, for the clearer illustration of the glory of his own attributes; and, therefore, the Scripture is clear in this, particularly to shew how the temptations of God's people make his attributes to be more illustrious; as first, his faithfulness: "God, who is faithful, will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able" (1 Cor. x. 13); —and then his wisdom: "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation." 2 Pet. ii. 9. He will, by his wisdom, find a way for their escape; and then also hereby will his pity and compassion be made glorious; therefore "Christ became like unto us, that he might be a merciful High Priest, able to succour and pity those that are tempted" (Heb. ii. 17); and then lastly, The glory of his power. In our weakness God will manifest his power, for "his strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. xii. 9). Thus it pleases God to exercise his people with great afflictions and temptations, for the setting-out of his own glorious attributes, and magnifying of his own name.

2. Another reason may be drawn from God's people themselves: —

1. God, in afflicting his children, aims at their good. Thus when the Devil tempted David to number the people, and when he was sacrificing at the floor of Ornan the Jebusite, there did God tell

him that the temple should be built (1 Chron. xxi. 1, and 2 Chron. iii. 1): this was the issue of his temptation. So when Job was so tempted and afflicted, the issue of all was for his good. Job's graces had never been so illustrious, had not the Devil's temptations been so furious. This is one end of God's afflicting his people, that their graces may become more bright.

2. Another may be to check pride. There is no greater temptation in the world to pride than eminency in grace. Pride is that worst fruit which grows upon the best stock. 'Tis not so much the ornaments of the body as the endowments of the mind which stirs up pride; and this was Paul's case, after his abundance of revelations; there was a thorn in his flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be lifted up (2 Cor. xii. 9). God will suffer those which have strong grace to be strongly tempted, to check the pride of their hearts.

3. The godly are more able to grapple with strong temptations than weaker Christians are; and so God suits the service and sufferings of his people to the proportion of the strength of grace.

3. Another reason may be taken from the Devil, from the malice which he bears to all the people of God, and especially to those who have most grace: — whom God loves most, the Devil hates most. When the voice from Heaven said to Christ, *Thou art my well beloved Son*, then came the Devil to assault and to tempt him. If you are the objects of God's dearest love, you will be the objects of the Devil's deepest rage; and though he cannot damn thy soul, yet he will trouble thy conscience; if he cannot break thy head, he will bruise thy heel.

2. It also proceeds from the Devil's knowledge as well as malice; he knows if he can but get those which are strong in grace to sin, he shall do the more mischief; as,

1, It will open the mouths of wicked men to

blaspheme God and religion, as in the case of David: "By this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme." 2 Sam. xii. 14. How were the mouths of God's enemies opened to blaspheme his name!

2. It will embolden the weak to sin with more freedom, when they shall see those who are eminent to fall; and thus the example of Peter made the Gentiles to judaize (Gal. ii. 14). When the strong shall abuse his liberty, he becomes a stumbling block to those which are weak (1 Cor. viii. 9.) When Phigellus and Hermogenes turned away from the faith, how did all Asia turn aside also! 2 Tim. i. 15. Men of eminent gifts, when they shall apostatize, how do they draw others in abundance!

3. It will provoke God to inflict heavy judgments on the places where you dwell. Thus the Devil knew that if he could get David to number the people, it would procure a judgment upon them; and, therefore, it is not said he stood up against David, but against Israel, "and provoked him to number the people" (1 Chron. xxi. 1); he well knew, if he could prevail with David, all Israel would suffer for it. Thus we see, that where there is strength of grace, there may be and are strong temptations.

But here may an objection be raised from that of John, where it is said, "He that is born of God sinneth not, and keepeth himself that the wicked one toucheth him not" (1 John v. 18); "and that they which are strong have overcome the wicked one." 1 John ii. 13; — and, if this be so, how can that be a truth, that strong temptations from the Devil may be consistent with strong grace in the heart?

When it is said, *The wicked one toucheth him not*, — that is not to be taken absolutely, as if the Devil did not tempt a man at all: therefore, there must be a restriction of the clause *he touches him*

not; that is, with a deadly touch; and so Cajetan: *This phrase excludes not the kinds of temptations; but that we are not hurt or eternally destroyed by them*:—but, I conceive rather that these words have a peculiar reference to the 16th verse; where mention is made of a sin unto death: the Devil shall not prevail, or touch a man so as to commit that sin which is unto death. Though he may tempt, and will be continually assaulting a man, yet he shall never prevail against him, so as to draw him to the commission of that sin.

1. From hence we may learn the indulgence of God to weak Christians; whilst their graces are weak, their temptations shall not be strong. God will not put weak Christians upon such strong trials as those who have obtained greater measures of grace. Not every man in David's army was put to break through the army of the Philistines to fetch of the waters of the well of Bethlehem, but David's three worthies. God will not put young converts to break through an host of temptations, until they shall have obtained experience and strength of grace to grapple with them.

2. Hence also learn, that men of the strongest and most eminent gifts and graces, ought not to presume on their own strength. "Consider thyself, lest thou also be tempted." Gal. vi. 1.—Thou which art most spiritual, take heed lest thou be foiled. Some mens' pride may make them think they are above ordinances, their own experience may satisfy them, yet they are not above temptations;—and certainly they who are not above temptations, will stand in need of ordinances; now, no man in the world either is or shall be above temptation: if any, surely Adam would; yet, he in Paradise, the best of places, and in innocency, the best of states, was not exempted from the temptations of the Devil, and thereby fell; therefore, let no man presume upon his own strength.

3. Remember this for thy comfort:—That tho'

the Devil tempt thee with strong temptations, yet he shall never have his will against thee. It is true, a godly man may fall into that particular act unto which the Devil tempts him, yet, as tot he Devil's general aim (the damning of thy soul) he shall never have his will. It is a notable expression that of our Saviour to Peter: says he, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." Luke xxii. 31. Satan hath desired to have thee: that was the Devil's general aim. Tho' he may have his will as to a particular act, and thou mayest yield to his temptation, yet he shall never carry thee with himself into Hell.

4. Remember, to your great comfort, you who are the people of God, and harrassed with the Devil's temptations, thou complainest that they are great for kind, long for continuance, and the more dangerous because suited to thy present condition, — remember, that thus the Devil dealt with Jesus Christ, his temptations were suited, continued, and for kinds gross, being to distrust providence, to self-murder, and to blasphemy! — and why was all this, but for thy comfort he suffered; being tempted, that he might be able to pity, compassionate, and succour thee, being in the same condition! Heb. ii. 18.

SERMON IX.

Preached at St. Lawrence Jury, London, March 16, 1651.

The same Text.

We proceed now unto a second case of conscience concerning strength of grace, which is this: *Whether strength of grace may be consistent with strength of lust and corruption in the heart?*

In the answering whereof I shall speak to these particulars: —

1. When may corruptions be said to be strong?

2. Why those that have strong grace have many times strong corruptions?

3. What strong corruptions are they that those that are strong in grace are most subject unto?

4. In what cases, and with what limitations may strength of corruptions consist with strength of grace?

1. *When may corruptions and lusts be said to be strong in the soul?*

1. When sins are committed with complacency.— Sin, at first, is like a snake that is almost starved by reason of the cold, and is very weak and feeble; but if it be laid in the bosom, then it gathers strength; and, after a while, sin revives and becomes a delight in the soul. If thou wert at first troubled at sin, and afterwards takest a pleasure in sin, it is a sign that sin hath a great hand over thee. Thus God complains of his people: "What hath my beloved to do in my house? When thou dost evil then thou rejoicest." Jer. xi. 15. We may know the power and strength of corruption in us, by Sin's activity in us, and by our cheerfulness and complacency in sin.

2. By the frequency of sin, as a relapse into a disease, argues the strength of that peccant humour in the body; so reiterated and multiplied acts of the same sin, argue the power and strength of that sin in our hearts. Corruption gathers strength, even as grace doth, by the frequent acting and exercise of it.

3. When sin is persisted in against the checks of conscience. — As it argues the strength of a stream that beats down before it whatsoever bank would check the course of it,—so it also argues that there is a strong current of corruption in thy soul, that bears down before it all the warnings, checks, and reproofs of Conscience.

2. *Why have those that have the strongest graces, many times also the strongest corruptions?*

1. It ariseth from the natural temperature and constitution of the body, which doth dispose men to some sin more than another, although they have such eminency of grace; and hence it is that those who are naturally and constitutionally passionate, and given to anger, though they may have a great measure of grace, yet what ado have they to bridle in their anger? What ado to be greatly angry, and not greatly sinful!—and so such, whose temperature inclines them to be lustful, though they have much grace, yet all little enough to suppress lustful thoughts and wanton looks in them.

II. God suffers this to humble his people, and to keep them humble under their great measures of grace. It is observable in nature, that those creatures who have the most excellency in them, have something also of defect and deformity in them, as if the God of Nature did it to keep them humble. The peacock hath glittering feathers, and yet black feet; the swan hath white feathers, but under that a dark skin; the eagle hath many excellencies, — quick sight and high flight, but yet very ravenous; the camel and elephant are great and stately creatures, but of a deformed shape: so

it is in the state of grace: God doth suffer some strong and unsubdued corruptions to remain in them, who have not only truth, but strength of grace; and this is to keep them humble. Thus Paul, after his great revelations, had a messenger of Satan to buffet him, and a thorn in the flesh to afflict (1 Cor. xii. 7) and keep him humble: the thorn in the flesh did let out the imposthumated matter of pride out of his heart; and the considerations of their corruptions doth much affect the hearts of the godly, that they become, 1. More condescending and compassionate to the weak. —2. They do depend less upon their own righteousness.— They see it is in vain to think of establishing their own righteousness; and that it is too weak a foundation to lay the weight and stress of their salvation upon: the covering is too narrow, and the bed is too short for them to rest quietly upon.—3. They are hereby brought to think better of others than of themselves; yea, to judge themselves the least of saints and the greatest of sinners.

III. This is from Satan's malice, who, if he can, will draw out great corruptions from them who are eminent in grace:—

1. He hereby aims to blemish religion, and to darken the honour of profession; and, in this case, usually fights against none, great nor small, but the king of Israel, viz. such as are eminent for holiness. When David fell into those great sins of murder and adultery, Satan had a main end granted him, to make the way of true religion stink and be abhorred. 2 Sam. xii. 14.

2. Hereby Satan hath his end to embolden those that are weak to sin. The sins and great miscarriages of such as are great professors, are great stumbling-blocks in the way of the weak, to make them fall. 1 Cor. viii. 10.

3. Hereby the peace and purity of conscience is violated: the Devil will play at small game rather

than at no game; and if he cannot prevail to damn thy soul, yet he will endeavour to disquiet thy conscience.

3. *What are those great corruptions and sins unto which believers are incident?*

1. To lose those strong affections which they had at their first conversion. Holy Greenham complained, that it was very difficult to keep together his old discretion and young zeal. Young Christians (as hath been observed) have strong affections and but weak judgments: their heat is more than their light; their present apprehension and sense is great and high, their experience little and low; and so also strong Christians, who may have much grace, yet the flood and flush of affections may be much abated; and it is the fault of old professors, that they do not labour to maintain the primitive vigour and vivacity of their first affections, — they are too apt "to leave their first love" (Rev. ii. 3, 4); yet we must know they do not decay so as to be bankrupts in grace. In the godly, the decay and declining, though it may be great, yet it is neither total nor final; though he may fail, yet he is not a bankrupt, — he hath still a stock remaining which can never be quite spent, — a fountain which can never be quite dry! "He hath in him a well of water, springing up to eternal life." John iv. 14. The water of a fountain may be mudded, but it will clear itself again. It may be dammed up in one place, but it will break out in another; so it is with grace. A tree, you know, in winter-season, the fruit and leaves fall off, and it seems as if it were dead; but there is life in the root; — so it is in Christians; their beauty and blossoms may fall off, their fruit dry up, their leaves drop off, the beauty, the exercise, and the fruits of grace may cease for a time, and yet "the root of the matter is in them." Job xix. 28. It often fares with old professors as it did with old David, of whom it is said, that all the clothes he did wear "could not get or keep heat

in him" (1 Kings i. 1): so they, all the duties they perform, and all the ordinances they enjoy, cannot keep up that youthful heat of vigorous affections which once they had. Many of God's children have not now, as once they had, such complacency in God, such fervency in prayer, such attention in hearing, such delight in Sabbaths, such mournfulness and tenderness of spirit, such hatred of sin. Now, they have not such aggravating thoughts of sin as in former times, nor the occasions unto sin so avoided as formerly. How many are there, who heretofore looked on every sin as an heinous evil, but now do not so! Time was, when every gnat seemed a camel, and every mote a beam, and every mole-hill a mountain; but now they can extenuate and excuse their sin. Heretofore, the most pleasing sin was abominable, the smallest detestable, and the lightest intolerable; but it is otherwise now, through spiritual decays and abatement in our affections. There are many heretofore, when they fell into sin, were wont to walk sadly, to sigh deeply, weep bitterly, pray fervently; but now do not these things with those warm and working affections as formerly. The time was, when many professors of religion prepared themselves for holy duties with more care, attended to them with more diligence, delighted in them with more complacency, and gained more profit and edification by them than now they do; and that is the first sin that those who have grace, both in truth and strength, are apt to fall into, viz. spiritual decay.

2. Such as are strong Christians are very subject to spiritual pride, and to be highly conceited of their own gifts, parts, and graces. Spiritual pride is a secret spiritual corruption, that is in the most spiritual and gracious heart: it is a bad fruit that grows on the best root. There is nothing better than grace, and there is nothing more abominable than sin, and there is no sin so bad as pride, and there are none so apt to fall into this sin of pride as

they that have much grace, and there is nothing weakens a strong Christian more than pride, and nothing argues weakness more than this boasting.

3. To behave themselves with contempt and superciliousness towards weak Christians, is an ordinary fault of the strong. There is not any one thing in Scripture more often mentioned than this: That we should not despise or discourage the weak; which notes an aptness in the strong to be faulty herein. "Let us not judge any one any more." Rom. xiv. 1, 2, 3, and ver. 13. The word *Meketi* notes, they were wont to do so before. Spiritual pride is a root of bitterness, which bears these two bitter fruits: — 1. An overvaluing of ourselves; — 2. An undervaluing of other mens' persons and gifts.

4. Strong Christians are apt to put too much duty and task upon the weak. John's disciples failed in this towards the disciples of Christ about fasting. Mat. ix. 16, 17. Strong Christians should deal tenderly with the weak; they should excuse their failings, conceal their weaknesses, commend their performances, cherish their forwardness, resolve their doubts, bear their burdens, and hereby make the way of religion to be lovely and amiable to them, whereas, by their too much austerity, the weak are disheartened at their first entrance.

5. To be content with measures of grace. How apt are they that have grace to say, in one sense, as he said in another, "Soul, take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years" (Luke xii. 19.); and hereupon many grow slack and careless in holy duties, and do not improve ordinances for the increase of their graces. The best of Christians are apt to fall into this satiety; than which nothing can be more prejudicial to the soul. The Devil tempts those that have but a little grace to think they have none; and those that have more grace, to think they have enough. The best are apt to mistake themselves in

this, — to think there is a just dimension and full growth of grace attainable in this life; whereas, indeed, the best improvement of having much grace, is to desire more, and not to be satisfied with any measure of grace "till we come to a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 13); and that is not attainable in this life. Perfection is the aim of this life; but it is the reward of another life. We should endeavour after perfection in grace; but we shall not attain it till grace be perfected in glory.

4. *In what cases, and with what limitations may strength of corruptions consist with strength of grace?*

The resolving of this question is of very much use to the soul; for that soul that is overmastered with strong corruptions, may not only question the strength of his grace, but the being of it. How may I then know that I have both the truth and strength of grace in me, though I am overpowered sometimes by strong and prevailing corruptions?

1. If you maintain in you a strong opposition against your corruptions.—The flesh lusteth against the spirit; "but doth the spirit lust against the flesh?" Gal. v. 17. Though you cannot fully subdue sin, yet do you strongly oppose it? If so, there is grace, and strength of grace too, which is able to make and hold up this opposition. An uncontrolled subjection unto sin, argues the strength of sin; but an irreconcilable opposition of sin argues the strength of grace. Strength of grace is not so much seen in those particular acts of suppression, and actual overcoming of it, as in that constant and habitual frame of heart in the opposition of sin.

2. Though sin be strong, yet grace may be strong too in thy soul. — If thou hast a strong measure of humiliation, though thy sin be great, if thy sorrow be great too, it evidenceth thy grace is so also. It was great grace in Manasseh that he "humbled

himself greatly" (2 Chron. xxxiii. 12) though he had been a very great sinner.

3. If thou hast strong cries to God against thy sins, this argues grace, though it be ready to be deflowered by thy corruptions. Deut. xxii. 26, 27. If, when corruptions and temptations prevail, thou prayest to the Lord with strong cries and tears, this argues grace; yea, and the strength of grace.

4. If thou hast strong affections that carry thee to Christ, certainly thou hast grace, though thy strong corruptions often carry thee from Christ. Peter had more infirmities, corruptions, and sins, than all the disciples besides, excepting Judas. He took Christ aside, gave him carnal counsel, and said, as to his sufferings, 'Far be it from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee;' for which Christ said to him, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Mat. xvi. 23. He dreams of merit, and boasts of what he had done for Christ, as it is observed of him when he said to Christ, "Behold, we have forsaken all and followed thee, what shall we have therefore?" Mat. xix. 27. — Peter, of all the disciples, was the most confident of his own strength, and boasts what he would do and suffer for Christ: "Though all men should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended; and if I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." Mat. xxvi. 33, 35. Nay, and presently after this confident undertaking, Peter denies Christ; and swears and curses that he knew him not. Some observe, that Peter's cursing was not only his cursing of himself if he knew Christ, but that he also cursed Jesus Christ, that so he might appear to them to be none of his disciples: and yet notwithstanding all this, Peter had not only truth and reality, but eminency and strength of grace; for though temptations and corruptions did sometimes prevail, yet he had strong affections towards

Jesus Christ: he did and suffered that which few or none of the other disciples did.

1. He was the man that, of all the disciples, wept the most bitterly for his sins. Mat. xxvi. 75.

2. Peter was the first man that ran to the sepulchre, and went into the sepulchre, to see what was become of Christ. John xx. 5, 6.

3. He was the man who, hearing that Christ was risen, and on the sea-shore, leaped into the sea for joy. John xxi. 7.

4. He was the man that made the first sermon, and first preached the gospel after the ascension of Christ. Acts i. 15.

5. He had that love to Christ which was as strong as death; for he suffered death, and was crucified (as say ecclesiastical writers); but would not be crucified but with his heels upwards, deeming it too great an honour to be crucified in the same manner that his Lord and Master was; so that the strength of his affections did argue notwithstanding his great failing, the strength of grace in him.

To make application of what hath been spoken in this case of conscience.

Though in the cases before mentioned, strength of grace may be consistent with strength of corruptions, yet there are other cases wherein they are altogether inconsistent.

1. When the strength and workings of corruptions are not clearly discovered to the soul; for grace always, as a light set up in the soul, doth discover the darkness of corruption.

2. Where corruptions are not sensibly bewailed, it is to be feared that there is not strength of grace.

3. Where occasions to those strong prevailing sins and corruptions are not heedfully avoided.—Certainly, if thou hast grace to make thee sensible of what corruptions thou art incident unto, thy

grace will make thee walk so circumspectly, as to avoid all occasions leading thereunto.

4. If they be not strongly resisted, and the beginnings of each corruption not diligently suppressed, — in this case, strength of grace and strength of corruptions are utterly inconsistent.

5. Though there may be strong grace and strong corruption in the soul, yet the reign of any one corruption is utterly inconsistent with grace and the strength of it. "Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies. Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom. vi. 12, 14, compared with chap. vii. 23); which is not to be understood in the Antinomist's sense, that believers are not under the mandatory power (Christ, as the Lord's servant, has equally accomplished the mandatory or commanding, and the condemning powers of the law for us; but owing to our present imperfection we do not fully enjoy this liberty; and, therefore, both these powers of the law, in some degree, are found useful to believers. Were we absolutely perfect, we should do good, as a tree naturally bears fruit without being bidden. — Edit.) of the moral law: but the meaning of the word *law*, as Beza interprets it, *is the law of sin*; and so the apostle Paul. chap. vii. 23, mentions *a law in his members that did war against the law of his mind, and did bring him into captivity to the law of sin*; that is, sin would have swayed in him with the power and force of a law; — and this argued grace, and the strength of grace in Paul, that though he was overborne by the strength of corruption and sin, and taken prisoner by it, yet he never yielded to it as a lawful sovereign; for so he adds, v. 25, "So then with the mind I serve the law of God; but with my flesh the law of sin." Rom. vii. 25. It may be said of the corruptions in God's children, what was shewed to Daniel concerning the beasts: "they had their

dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season." Dan. vii. 12.

6. When we say there is a consistency between grace and corruption, I would be understood of spiritual and inward corruptions, as hardness of heart, spiritual pride, deadness in duties; for into gross external open acts of evil, strong Christians do seldom fall.

7. We must also be further informed, that if we consider particular acts of sin, some one lust may seem to be more strong in a godly Christian than in a mere moral man. As for instance, in the case of lust, when we consider how David did abuse his neighbour's wife, and how Abimelech would not touch another man's wife,—one would have judged David the heathen and Abimelech the believer;—and, therefore, the strength of grace or corruption must not be judged by any one particular act, when some impetuous temptation hath prevailed.

8. Lastly, We are to know that a corruption may be really weakened when sensibly strong. As a man in a fever is seemingly strong, but is really weak,—so corruption may be more than most enfeebled when, in our apprehension, it is most enraged; it may rave and rage most when it is in crucifying. As a coal glows most just before its going out, or a candle burnt down in the socket gives a blaze a little before it be extinct, so it is often when corruption is ready to expire. As in a mere moral man, sin may be restrained when it is not subdued, or corruption may be quiet where it is not mortified, so in a regenerate person it may be subdued and mortified, where yet it may rage as if unrestrained. A man's last gasp may be the strongest breath; so when corruption is ready to give up the ghost, it may seem to breathe strongest. As a bird may flutter when his neck is broken, so sin may seemingly resist grace when the power, strength, and life of it is utterly broken.

SERMON X.

Preached at St. Lawrence Jury, London, April 6, 1651.

The same Text.

We have already handled two great *cases of conscience*, about *strength of grace*, about the consistency of strong temptations and strong corruptions with the strength of grace, and shall now proceed to a third case, which is this:—

3. *Whether strength of grace may consist with the want of those strong affections which Christians have had at their first conversion?*

In answering whereof I shall endeavour to shew three things:—

1. When a man may be said to lose his first affections.

2. In what cases a strong Christian may want strong affections.

3. Whence it is that those that have strong grace, may want such strong affections as they had at their first conversion.

1. *When may a Christian be said to lose his first affections?* Affections are fitly compared to the pulses of the soul, by which judgment may be given of the state and temper of the soul; and that we may know when these affections beat low and are decayed, we may make judgment hereof.

1. When we have not such eager desires after duties. It is very remarkable, that at a Christian's first conversion, he is so earnest and eager after holy duties, that he will hardly allow time for the duties of his particular calling; nay, how have men at first tied themselves to hear so many sermons, make so many prayers, read so many chapters, spend so many hours in holy meditation by

themselves, and good conference with other Christians! but, alas, afterward, this fervour begins to cool and remit, and men pray less, and hear more seldom; and this is from the multitude of their worldly occasions. Usually, men at their first conversion (which as divines have observed) ordinarily doth fall out between the eighteenth and twenty-eighth year of their age (though God indeed be tied to no year) yet men at that age have usually less of the world; and so it comes to pass, that afterward when the cares, and profits, and pleasures of the world steal away their affections, that they grow much more remiss than they were at the beginning.

2. Affections may be judged to be decayed, when men have not such ravishing joys as they were wont to have. How many have been at first in David's frame of heart: "I was glad when they said to me, Come let us go into the house of the Lord?" (Psalm cxxii.) — but afterwards the overflowing of this flood of joy by degrees hath abated!

3. When sensible profit by ordinance is abated. — A man may profit by ordinances, and yet not be sensible of his profiting. A Christian may grow at the root in solidity of grace, though it may not shoot up so much in blossoms of affection.

2. *In what cases may a strong Christian want strong affections?*

1. In case you have less sin in duties, though less affections. A weak young convert hath oftentimes much affection in holy duties, but much corruption too. They are very subject to rashness and precipitancy in their prayers, and to be proud of any small measures of grace in duty, and too apt to have carnal dependence upon their duties: but old experienced Christians, as they have often less affection, so less sin in duties. Papists have very much affection in the per-

formance of their devotions; but, alas, they have the leaven of this error in their best duties, that they think they merit by them: but grown and knowing Christians, though they may not be so affectionate in duty as the weak, yet they may exercise much more grace than they do; — and so also it is after duties are performed. Weak Christians are apt to indulge their corruptions afterwards, thinking they have made a compensation for their sins by their duties; but an experienced grown Christian, though not so affectionate in duty, yet he is careful afterwards that he do not by sin spoil all his duties.

2. A strong Christian may want strong affections, in case he hath strength of judgment to recompense the want of his affections. *Young trees are more sappy; but old trees more solid*; wherefore the apostle prays for the Philippians, not only that "their love might abound," but that "their judgments might also abound." Phil. i. 9. As a man that is come to his full age, though he do not grow in bulk and extension of parts, yet he grows intensively, and in the consolidation of the parts of the body: so old and experienced Christians, though they have not so much affection, yet they have more solidity and clearness of judgment, more experimental knowledge in the profound mysteries of the gospel, and more distinct apprehensions of the deep things of Christ. A strong believer, what he wants in affections he hath compensated to him in a distinct and experimental knowledge of the deceitfulness of his heart, of the vanity of the world, of the sinfulnes of sin, and of the transcendent excellency of Christ. New converts are rash, inconsiderate, injudicious; and, therefore, we have a promise made to new converts, that they shall proceed in grace. It is a promise made to the Gentiles, when the king-

dom of Christ shall come amongst them, that though at the first they were rash, yet, it is said, "the heart of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plain." Isaiah xxxii. 4. Affection without knowledge will be but rashness, which (like mettle in a young horse) will be apt to precipitate him and make him stumble. An experienced Christian, though he hath not so much seeming mettle in his affection, yet shall rid more way to Heaven by far than a young convert, and that without fear of stumbling. At the first kindling of the fire, there may be more smoke, though afterward the flame will be clearer; so when at first thou hast much affection, afterwards thou shalt have a clearer judgment.

3. A strong Christian may want strong affections in case it proceed from a natural temper, and not from a sinful careless distemper. There are some persons that are naturally of a soft and tender disposition, and these are naturally more affectionate; nay, the woman who is the weaker vessel, commonly her heart holds most affection: and so likewise there are some who naturally are more bound up in their affections and are of a reserved temper, who naturally do not break out into any great expression either of the passion of joy or grief. We read in the gospel, that they that expressed most affection to Christ at his death, and made the most passionate lamentation for him, were the women (Luke xxiii. 27.); who naturally are of a more melting disposition.—Some mens' dispositions are like ice, they will easily thaw and melt; others like iron, it must be a hot fire that will melt them down; so it is that some men will be more affectionate upon a small occasion than others upon a greater; and this is from natural disposition. Melancthon was not so affectionate as Luther; but, it is observed, that he was more judicious.

4. In case of sickness and old age, and bodily weakness.—He that hath strength of grace may yet want strength of affection. The expression of our affection depends much upon the temperature of the body: if bodily strength and vigour be impaired, our affections must needs flag. As the ebbing and flowing of the sea depend upon the motion and influence of the moon,—so our affections do ebb and flow much as the strength or weakness of body hath an influence upon them. As a musician, when he is grown old, cannot so dexterously handle an instrument as when he was young, though perhaps he hath now more judgment and experience in music,—so it is in old age, that brings experience in the ways of God, yet may abate affections. Old age and sickness make the body like a tired horse to the active soul; an active traveller would fain ride away to his journey's end; but his horse is tired. An aged sickly Christian may have as much grace and more than he had at first, and yet not be so able to pray: and so a minister, not so able to preach affectionately as before; and this from the indisposition of the body.

3. Whence is it that those that have strength of grace, may yet want those strong affections which they had at their first conversion?

1. Because at first conversion grace was but particularly employed, which afterwards was more diffused and generally employed. When much water runs in one channel it makes the stream the stronger: but when there are many rivulets cut out, though there is as much and more water, yet there is not the same strength of stream: so it is at our first conversion, all our affections made up but one stream, and so our affections seemed the stronger. A new convert hath not so many duties to perform as a grown Christian hath, because he doth not know so many duties. It may be at first, all his affections run out to

pray, and hear the word, and read good books; and whilst all the affections run in this one channel they seem to be very strong; whereas a grown Christian hath not only these general duties, but many particular duties of his calling and relations to follow; he hath many duties to perform to God and men which a new convert knows not; and, therefore, it is that though his affections may seem weaker, yet his grace is as strong as before, and stronger.

2. This is from the newness of the condition. —Naturally we are much affected with any new thing; as for example, for a man that hath been many years in a dark dungeon, to be suddenly brought into the light, the suddenness of the change would much affect a man. This is the state of our souls at our first conversion; we are "thereby brought from darkness into light, and from the power of Satan unto God." 1 Peter ii. 9. By the grace of conversion, *God calls us out of darkness into his marvellous light*; and, because it is so marvellous, therefore it doth so much affect. The change at first conversion is very great; a man becomes another man, and a man is so affected, that he is put into a kind of astonishment; — yet, in this case, we must distinguish between solid affections and floating and transient passions, which do wear off presently, and vanish suddenly. The affections of some Christians, especially young ones, are like those colours which are not in grain; they will soon fade. It is with a young convert as with a man going to execution: while he is upon the ladder a pardon is unexpectedly brought, how will this man be transported with joy; he will leap for joy, he will, in that case, be all joy and exultation for the present; and, it may be, afterward the flush and torrent of his joy is abated, though his life be as dear to him as ever: so when the soul hath been brought by the law of God to a

sight of its lost condition, and then the gospel hath proclaimed a pardon, and the Spirit of God hath set on the comfort of that pardon upon his heart, Oh, what ravishments hath that soul for the present! which, perhaps, he shall not long retain; the violence of his joy is abated, but the solidity of it remains. The soul is much affected with its first meeting with Christ; and though the flush of that joy be over, yet the soul's love to Christ is as much; its prize-communion with Christ is the same. The cripple, when he was restored to strength, went leaping and praising God (Acts iii. 1), because the unexpectedness of the cure did mightily affect his heart; and this is a second reason why those who are grown and solid Christians, yet, perhaps, may not retain the same measure of affections they had at their first conversion.

3. A third reason may be taken from God's indulgence to young converts; who usually gives in comfort according to the necessity of his people. It is with God, our heavenly Father, as with natural parents; they are most tender over their newborn children. That parable of the returning prodigal is very full to this purpose; his father did not only receive him mercifully, but bountifully too; he gave him more than was for necessity; not only shoes, but a ring; not only clothes, but the best robe; not only bread, but the fatted calf, and music at this feast (Luke xv. 23); and all this was for this newly-converted and repenting son, though his father did not entertain him so every day: so our God, at our first conversion, expresseth much of his bounty and indulgence to his children; though afterward we may have the same love of God, and the same love to God, though the expressions may not be the same now as formerly in those days of God's bounty.

Let us from hence learn, that though we have lost those affections which we had, yet we must,

1. Labour to be sensible of, and humbled for those decays. A decayed condition is an uncomfortable condition; though thou hast so much grace as will bring thee to Heaven, yet by thy decays thou wilt be very uncomfortable here on earth.

2. Labour to get those decays repaired. If thou "hast left thy first love, repent and do thy first works." Rev. ii. 4, 5.

5. Make up the want of former affections in solidity of knowledge and judgment; and if the candle give not so great a blaze, let it give a more clear and constant light.

4. Labour to keep up the primitive vigour of your affections.

1. Remember, you may lose that in a short time which you may be a long time in recovering. A man may lose more strength in one week's sickness, than many months will make reparation. A wound may be quickly made, but not so soon cured. Philosophers will tell us, that the way from the habit to the privation is far easier than from the privation to the habit: it is far easier to make a seeing man blind, than to make a blind man see; so it is far easier to lose our holy affections than it is to recover them.

2. Labour to keep up your holy affections; for the truth of grace is more discerned by our affections than our actions. Acts of grace may be easier dissembled than gracious affections. A painter may paint the colour, but not the heat of the fire.

3. Labour to keep up affections as they were at first, because it is very hard to retain them: it is hard to keep them wound up to any height. Flush of spiritual joy is like the sea; the tide doth not so flow, but the ebb doth fall as low. Bernard said of these strong gusts and great flush of these

spiritual joys and gracious affections, *They come but seldom, and stay but a short time.* As in nature there is a spring, and then the fall of the leaf, and one day is clear and another is cloudy, so it is with the best Christian; his affections are not always at the same pitch, at the same height;—but it should be our endeavour to cherish and maintain in our souls our first flourishing affections in and toward the ways of God.

SERMON XI.

Preached at St. Lawrence Jury, London, the same day, 1651.

The same Text.

HAVING dispatched three cases of conscience concerning strength of grace, I now proceed to a fourth; viz.

Whether a man that hath strength of grace, may want the comfort of his grace?

I shall answer this question affirmatively: A man that hath the strength of grace, yet may want the comfort of it. Strength of grace (as you have heard) doth not exempt a man from temptations from the Devil, nor from desertions from God. It is an undoubted rule, There may be strength of grace where there is not the comfort and evidence of it. A child of light may walk in darkness for a time (Isaiah l. 10); and, though he have the Holy Ghost working grace, and increasing grace in his heart, yet he may want the oil of gladness, though he hath received a precious anointing of grace. 1 John ii. 27. A child of God, as to his spiritual condition, may, for a time, be in the same condition that Paul and the mariners were in, who, for many days, saw neither sun nor stars appear, being under no small tempest, hopes of being saved being taken away. Acts xxvii. 20, — so it fares with God's dearest children, that they be in the dark, and can see no light; — they may have the graces of the Spirit, and yet want the comforts of the Spirit.

In the opening of which point, I shall thus proceed:

1. I will prove this from Scripture, That a child

of God may be strong in grace, and yet want the comfort of his grace.

2. I will lay down some reasons why it is thus.

3. Some directions how those that have grace, and yet do want the comfort of their graces, should procure unto themselves the comforts of their graces.

4. And then I shall commend some comfortable considerations to such as have grace, but want the comfort of it.

1. For the first, I shall give you instances, both in the Old and New Testament, that those that have been strong in grace have wanted comfort.

1. Job, a man eminent for grace, "a perfect and upright man, and one that feared God and eschewed evil,"—and yet you have Job complaining, "Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy?" Job i. 1. and xiii. 24. Nay, God did not only hide his face, but handle him as his enemy; for he thus makes his moan: "He tears me in his wrath;" that is, to be referred to God, and not unto the Devil, or to Job's unmerciful enemies or uncharitable friends. "He teareth me;" that is, 'God teareth me; who, in my apprehension (saith Job) hateth me, and gnasheth upon me with his teeth; and, as an enemy, sharpeneth his eyes upon me' (Job xvi. 9): and, that these apprehensions were upon Job, that God was his enemy, see him further lamenting himself: "He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone, and mine hope hath he removed as a tree: he hath also kindled his wrath against me, and counteth me unto him as one of his enemies: yea, destruction from God was a terror to him." Job xix. 10, 11. xxxi. 23.

2. Asaph, a holy man, yet thus complains: "Will the Lord cast off for ever, and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger

shut up his tender mercies?" Psalm lxxvii. 7, 8. These are the sad expostulations of a troubled spirit, cast down under deep dejections, and in the dark, by reason of the suspension of divine favour.

3. David, a man after God's heart, whose gracious breathings, through the whole book of Psalms, shew that he was a man of an excellent spirit, and had much grace, yet David wanted the comfort of his grace when his soul was cast down, and his spirit was disquieted within him (Psalm xlii. 5): and so,

4. Heman, a man who for wisdom was so eminent, that the Holy Ghost useth him as an instance of wisdom: — "As wise as Heman;" and yet, in Psalm lxxxviii. quite through that Psalm, was a strain of as sad a complaint as you shall meet withal in the whole book of God. *Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deep; thy wrath lieth hard upon me; and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves.* So little comfort had these holy men, though they were eminent in grace. It is true of many dear children of God, what was said of the apostles and disciples of Christ, "Whither I go (saith Christ) ye know, and the way ye know. John xiv. 4, 5. To which speech of Christ, Thomas answers in the next verse, *Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?* Augustine doth thus reconcile this: *They did know whither Christ went, but they durst not once believe that they had such knowledge: they did not know their own knowledge.* The expressions of Christ were different from those words of Thomas. The Lord Jesus spake as it was, and Thomas spake as he thought. The apostles had grace, and yet wanted the comfort and assurance of it. I will not instance here of the Lord Jesus, who, though he was full of grace and truth, yet he wanted comfort when he was in that bitter agony, and cried out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Indeed, in the New Testament

there are not so many instances as we find in the Old Testament; and the reason is this, Profession at the first publishing and promulgation of the gospel, met with so many and such sharp afflictions, that God did indulge them, and made "their inward graces to abound as their outward sufferings did abound." 2 Cor. i. 5. These instances may suffice to prove, That it is true believers who are strong in grace, yet may want the comfort of their graces.

2. To give you some grounds of this, the reasons may be drawn either, 1, From God; or, 2, From ourselves; or, 3, From the Devil.

1. Reason is from the Lord, to withhold from them to whom he hath given grace the comfort of their grace.

1. To manifest his divine authority and absolute sovereignty over his people. As the natural light of the day and darkness of the night are at God's disposal, so also is the spiritual light of comfort and the darkness of a deserted and dejected spirit. God gives divine and spiritual consolations, out of the goodness of his will, and withdraws them, to shew the absoluteness and sovereign liberty of his will.

2. To let his people know that comfort is not essential to holiness, neither inseparably and necessarily belonging to grace.—Though there cannot be true peace where there is no grace, yet there may be true grace where there is no peace.

3. God, in the dispensation both of grace and comfort, shews himself a free and gracious agent; and all our graces which God works in us, are merely from God's grace to us.—He will give comfort when and to whom he pleaseth; but still, as a reward of his own free grace, the comfort of a pardon. The comfortable knowledge of our pardon is as well from God's free grace as the pardon itself; and, therefore, God suspends the comfort of grace, to make us look up to him for it. When

thou repentest, God gives a pardon; but therein he rewards his own work in thee. To give a pardon or a sense of a pardon, is an act of mere liberality in God.

4. God doth this to put a difference between Heaven and Earth. Heaven is a place for comfort, Earth for duty: Earth is for the getting of grace, Heaven for the rewarding of grace. Our Lord Jesus Christ, like the good master of the feast, reserves the best for the last. The sons of nobles, when they travel into foreign parts, have no more allowance than what will accommodate their travels; their inheritance is reserved for them when they come to their father's house: so believers, who are strangers and pilgrims here, have so much grace and comfort as befits their passage to Heaven; but they have an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, but is reserved in the Heavens. God thinks it not fit to give constant comforts in an inconstant world, nor full comforts in an empty world, nor lasting comforts in a transitory world.

2. Reason may be taken from ourselves, and that in many regards; those that have much grace, yet may have but a little comfort; and this may spring from a threefold root in us:—

1. From something that is merely natural in us.

2. From something that is spiritual and good.

3. From something that is evil in us.

1. This may arise from the prevalency of a natural melancholy in the body, whereby the understanding may be darkened, the fancy troubled, reason perverted, and the soul saddened. Melancholy is the mother of Discomfort, and the nurser of Doubting. It was, as some think, depth of melancholy that prevailed upon Nebuchadnezzar, that he did not know, whilst under the power of that distemper, whether he was a man or a beast;—and in the like manner may this bodily melan-

choly so far distemper thy soul, that thou who hast grace, yet mayest not know whether thou art a child of God or a child of the Devil. It is no more wonder to see a melancholy man doubt and question his spiritual condition, than it is to see a child cry when he is beaten, or to hear a sick man groan. You may silence a melancholy man when you are not able to comfort him; and though you may resolve his doubts and scruples by evident and convincing answers and arguments, yet let but such a man retire alone, and brood over his melancholy thoughts, by the prevalency of his perturbing humour, all is forgotten, and he is as unsatisfied as if you had said nothing to him; and you may perceive, that it is the power of melancholy that is the cause of a man's distemper when he is very much troubled, and yet can give no distinct account of any particular thing that doth trouble him.

2. This discomfort often ariseth from that which is good in us, viz. from that holy jealousy and tenderness of conscience which makes a child of God suspect and enquire into his condition: and though he have true grace, and much grace, yet he is afraid lest all be but a delusion:—in such cases the soul doth so pore on sin and infirmities, that it cannot see its own evidences. A tender conscience is more apt to be dejected in the sight of sin, than to be comforted in the sense of grace, and the reason of this is, because sin doth more directly fall under the cognizance of our conscience, especially a natural conscience. "The works of the flesh are manifest" (Gal. v. 19); but the fruits of grace and of the Spirit are not so easily discerned.

3. This discomfiture usually springs from a root of bitterness, even in the best of God's children, and that whereby God doth punish the sins of his people.

1. *Their quenching the motions of the Spirit.*—

If you grieve the Spirit of God, it is just with God to grieve your spirits. You never send God's Spirit sad to Heaven; but God may make sad your spirits on earth.

2. Slightness and fearlessness of heart towards God. — When children grow saucy, peremptory, and malipert before their parents, 'tis no wonder if a father's frown correct that irreverence. Most of those who lie uncomfortably under a sense of the displeasure of God, may thank themselves for it; they have provoked God by their bearing themselves too much upon his love, and growing secure and fearless to offend God. God loves to have his children come near him in an holy confidence that he is their Father, but yet to keep their distance by humble reverence.

3. Another sin that God punishes in his children, by withholding comfort from those who are strong in grace, is their superciliousness, contempt, and uncompassionateness towards others that are but weak in grace. God's own people are very much to blame herein, in rigour and unmercifulness towards those that are weak in the faith, despising all that are inferior to them in gifts and graces, whereby they often *break the bruised reed, and quench the smoking flax*, and want bowels of pity and tenderness towards their brethren. To take down pride, God often brings such, even his own people, to be low in comfort; and it is but just that they should want comfort who have neglected to comfort and cherish those that were weak in grace.

4. A growing cold, and lazy, and heedless in holy duties. If we put off God without true service, God may justly put us off without true comfort. This rule holds in spiritual affairs: *He that will not work shall not eat.* If we abate in the sanctifying work of the Spirit, it is but just that God withhold the comforting work of the Spirit. *The sluggard* (saith Solomon) *hath poverty enough:*

so, if we grow lazy and sluggish in holy duties, it is just that our stock of comfort do decay. Though holy duties do not merit comforts, yet comfort usually riseth and falls according to our diligence in duties. True grace is never so apparent to and sensible in the soul as when it is in action; and, therefore, want of exercise must needs cause want of comfort. As fire in the flint is never seen or felt till it be struck out by the steel, so grace and the comfort of grace, never so sensible as when exercised much in holy duties.

5. Any one sin indulged by, or concealed in the conscience, is enough to mar all your comfort. Concealed guilt contracts horror. The candle will never burn clear whilst there is a thief in it. Sin in the conscience is like Jonah in the ship, which causeth a tempest, that the conscience is like a troubled sea, whose waters cannot rest: or it is like a mote in the eye, which causeth a perpetual trouble while it is there; or, like the wind gathered in the caverns of the earth, which makes earthquakes and terrible eruptions. It is just with God that "a man's own iniquities should correct him, and his backsliding should reprove him." Jer. ii. 19. — Concealed guilt, though it may not bring a child of God to Hell, yet, for a time, it may bring Hell into his conscience: so that by all these particulars we may see that, if our comforts be abated, we may thank ourselves for it. Prov. xiv. 14.

3. Reason is taken from the restless rage and malice of Satan, who, when he cannot do the greater, will do the less; and if he cannot damn thy soul, he will labour all he can to disquiet thy conscience. The Devil aims principally to make us walk sinfully; and if not so, then uncomfortably; if he cannot make us live without God and Christ, and grace in the world, then he endeavours to make us live beside the comfort of our grace; — and hence it is that many dear children of God, who have truth and strength of

grace in them, yet, hearkening too much to Satan, live beside the comfort of their grace.

3. But what shall I do, that want the comfort of my grace, to procure it, that so I may have comfort answerable to grace?

1. Live more in the exercise of grace; and that is the ready way, not only to increase grace, but to obtain the comfort of grace. It was the apostolic salutation, — *Grace and peace be multiplied.* If grace be multiplied (and that it will by the exercise of it) then peace will also be multiplied. "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever." Isaiah xxxii. 17. "Great peace have they which love thy law; and nothing shall offend them." Psalm cxix. 165.

2. Leave no sin unrepented of; take heed of the guilt of sin lying on the conscience; take away the thief out of the candle, and it will burn clear. "If iniquity be in thy hand, put it far from thee, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles; for thou shalt then lift up thy face without spot, yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear. Behold, now (saith Job) I have ordered my cause, I know that I shall be justified" (Job xi. 14, 15, and xiii. 18). The more ordered our ways are, the more steady and full are our comforts; the more sin in the soul, the less comfort in that soul.

3. Call to mind former experiences that thy soul hath had of God. Thus did David when, by reason of the discomfort of his soul, he cried out, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted in me? Oh, my God, my soul is cast down within me, therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan and of the Hermonites" (Psalm xlii. 5, 6); that is, I will remember thee, and what thou didst at Jordan, when thou didst dry up the river, and thy people passed on dry land into Canaan; — and I will remember the

land of the Hermonites; that is, what thou didst unto Og, king of Bashan, and to Sihon, king of the Amorites; for Hernon was part of the country of those kings" (Josh. xii. 1.): so the psalmist was under great discomfort when he cried, *Will the Lord cast off for ever? Is his mercy clean gone from me?* &c.;—but he recovers himself out of that sad case by remembering former experiences; for so he adds, verse 12, "I will remember the works of the Lord; surely, I will remember wonders of old; I will meditate of all thy works, and talk of thy doings." Psalm lxxvii. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12. Past experiences should be present encouragements.

4. Attribute to God the glory of his now grace; and this is the way to enjoy the comfort of our grace. Say with the church, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give the glory." Psalm cxv. 1. It will be just with God to deny you the comfort of grace, if you deny him the glory of his grace. Want of comfort is God's physic to cure our souls of spiritual pride; and humble thankfulness for the least grace, is the way to enjoy the comfort of all our graces.

5. Spend more time in cherishing thy comforts than in questioning of them. It is the fault of some Christians to spend more time in fruitless complaints of the want of comforts, than in faithful endeavours after comforts in God's way. There are those who are more inquisitive how they lost their comforts, than careful how to recover them; and so, indeed, they weaken their own hands, but do strengthen the hands of Satan.

A fourth general head propounded in the solution of this case, was this:—what may be the comfortable considerations which may be gathered from the truth delivered, viz. that strong Christians may be but weak in comfort?

Now the handling of this last, will be an application of the other three particulars, by way of con-

solation to those that may perhaps now have strong grace but weak comfort.

1. The godly are never without the ground of comfort, though they may be without the sense of comfort. Though they may be without present feeling, yet they do not want real cause of consolation. They have an undoubted right to comfort, though not a clear sight of comfort. A child may have right to an inheritance, though he be not able to demonstrate and prove his right. Perhaps a man cannot read his evidences for his land, and yet those evidence give him a right to his lands; so it is with a child of God; — he hath comfort sown, though perhaps he cannot presently reap it. *Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright of heart.* As it is was with Hagar in the wilderness of Beer-sheba, her water was spent in the bottle, and she cast her child away from her, because she could not endure to see him die; she lift up her voice and wept, that she and her child should both miserably perish by thirst, and yet there was a well of water hard by her, but she saw it not (Gen. xxi. 16, 17); so it is with many a poor soul who are athirst for comfort, and, as they think, ready to perish: and yet there is a well of water of life and comfort just by, but they want the eye of faith to see it; — and this is a great comfort, that a child of God, though he may want comfort, yet he hath a right unto comfort, in that he hath truth of grace in him.

2. At that time when God withholds comfort from thee, yet he doth really love thee. Jesus Christ doth sometimes serve his children as Joseph served his brethren: — he spake roughly to them, and he put them in prison; and yet Joseph did dearly love his brethren, and his bowels did yearn towards them: — thus Jesus Christ, his real love is the same to his children at all times, though the manifestation of it may not be always alike: Joseph knew his brethren, though his brethren did not know him. *The Lord knows who are his;*

though those that are his, perhaps, do not know that they are so. Jesus knew Mary, though she did not know him. John xx. 15.

3. There may be much mercy to us in withdrawing of comfort. There may be as much goodness of God manifested in the withdrawing of comfort as in the giving of comfort. God, many times in wrath, lets a man be filled with the ungrounded comfort of supposed grace. Oh, beloved, it is far better to want comfort than grace. Many a man that hath no true grace, yet hath seeming comfort; but a child of God is often without comfort, that he may examine and exercise his grace; and so at last enjoy a well-grounded joy, and a well-bottomed consolation. Grace is the best foundation of spiritual consolation.

SERMON XII.

Preached at St. Lawrence Jewry, London, April 20, 1654.

The same Text.

I HAVE already handled four cases of conscience concerning strength of grace, *viz.*

1. *Whether strong temptations may be consistent with strength of grace?*

2. *Whether strong corruptions may consist with the strength of grace?*

3. *Whether a man may be strong in grace, and yet want those strong affections which he had at his first conversion?*

4. *Whether a man may have strength of grace, and yet want the comforts of his grace?*

I shall proceed now to a fifth case of conscience, *viz.*

Whether a man may be said to have strength of grace who hath but weak gifts?

In the opening of which case I shall thus proceed.

1. I will premise some positions.

2. I shall positively resolve the case.

3. And then give you some practical inference by way of application.

I will begin with the first, namely, the positions; and they are these four following: —

The first position is this, That though all believers have the same spirit, yet God in his wisdom thinks it fit they shall not have the same gifts. "There are," saith the apostle, "diversities of gifts; but the same spirit." 1 Cor. xii. As it is with flowers, there is not same the smell, but different smells to different flowers; and yet all their scents have the same influence from above; and, as it is with instruments of music, there are

divers sounds in the organ, but the same breath doth cause the several sounds; so in the church of God, — though there is the same influence of the Spirit of God, yet not the same measure of gifts in each member of the church.

The second position is this: That diversity of gifts is not to be ascribed to man's industry, diligence, or education; but to the free pleasure and dispensation of God. It is true, much may be ascribed to study, industry, and diligence in the way of gifts, which was the ground of the apostle's exhortation: "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine, &c. and meditate on these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all." 1 Tim. iv. 13, 15. The apostle speaks there of profiting in ministerial gifts; which gifts, diligence, and study do much advantage and promote; yet, though we were all equal in study and diligence, there would be a diversity in our gifts, lest men should vaunt of their industry in acquiring gifts, and thereby exclude God's bounty in bestowing them.—Psalm cxxvii. 1. *Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.* — Saith Hildersam, *Suppose that two men were to read the same books, and to study the same matter every day, yet the one may be a dunce, and a man of low gifts; and the other may have rare parts and excellent endowments. This is to shew who we are beholden to; that is, God, whose dispensation of gifts are many and variously bestowed.* Hence it is, the apostle telleth us, "That all these gifts worketh that one and the self-same spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will" (1 Cor. xii. 11); so that tho' one man differ from another in gifts, yet it is God that maketh him to differ.

The third position is this: That a man may be excellent in one gift, and yet defective in other gifts, — one man shall not have all. This is very observable by instances you have in Scripture.

The first instance is between Paul and Barnabas. If you look unto Paul, his gift was the gift of utterance and freedom of speech; insomuch, that at Lystra, Paul was taken for Mercury (Acts xiv. 11) the god of Eloquence; because he was the chief speaker: and though it is said of Paul, That "he was rude of speech" (2 Cor. xi. 6); that is, not as if it were so indeed, but in the opinion and conceit of the Corinthians, who, being seduced by false teachers, hearken to their disparagements of Paul. Paul was a most eloquent man, and had much of the gift of utterance; but now Barnabas did excel Paul in other gifts, to comfort those who were troubled in conscience: he was a "son of consolation" (Acts iv. 36, and xi. 24) to comfort troubled consciences. So likewise in the case of Peter and the other apostles; divines gather from Christ's commission to Peter, singling him out, when he said, "Peter, feed my lambs; Peter, lovest thou me?" John xxi. 15. The reason that some expositors give why Peter was singled out, was this, Because Peter had an excellent gift in preaching and in feeding the lambs of Christ; that is, weak believers. Moreover, it is said of James and John, that they were called *Sons of Thunder* (Mark iii. 17) as having a more powerful gift from God to terrify and awake a sinner's conscience than Peter and other apostles had; so that though some of the apostles had most excellent gifts, yet some of them excelled others in some one gift.

The fourth position is, That there are cases wherein men may have great gifts, but weak grace. God is pleased sometimes to carry mens' gifts very high, when their graces have not a proportionable elevation; and the reason is, Because gifts are for the good of others, for the edification of the church of God, and not for the good of a man's self only: "they were wanting in no gift, and had all knowledge;" and yet when he

mentions their graces, he saith, "I could not speak to you as spiritual, but carnal" (1 Cor. v. 7, compared with iii. 1): they outstrip other churches in gifts; yet they come short of other churches in grace. Such was the church of Laodicea; she was rich in gifts and poor in grace. Now, there are four cases wherein men may have strong gifts, and yet but little grace.

1. When mens' notions are clear and strong, but mens' experiences and affections but low and weak; to have more expressions than impressions, — to be like the moon, that though from the wane it grows big, and increases to the full, yet it increases only in light, and not in heat; so men, when they merely increase in light of notions and speculations, and not in heat of affection towards God and the practical part of Christianity; and it is to be feared that much of the religion of these times is of this stamp: it is more in notion than motion, — more in talking than walking, — more in parts than grace.

2. When thy gifts are not influential upon thy life. — Look as it is in that disease of the rickets, that children are liable to; they may grow big in the head, and yet decay in the lower parts; so there are some (as it hath been shewn) who have the disease of the spiritual rickets; they do grow big in the head, big in gifts, and yet decay in their vitals, decay in grace, and the exercise of it.

3. When their gifts do but tend to the promotion of division in the church, and pride in their own hearts. This was discovered in the church of Corinth: "they came behind in no gifts" (1 Cor. i. 7); but see what he saith in ver. 11: *For it has been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Cloe, that there are contentions among you:* — and then, in ver. 12, *Now this I say, That every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I, of Apollos; and I, of*

Cephas; *and I, of Christ:* they were carnal as to grace, and walked as men, though they were high in gifts, and when gifts engender strife in the church, and pride in a man's own heart, and when they do elevate and puff up the heart with vain and high conceits, this is an argument they are but mere gifts. The Corinthians were "in every thing enriched by God, — in all utterance, and in all knowledge" (1 Cor. i. 5); so that they came behind in no gift, they had abundance of knowledge; but "knowledge puffeth up, charity edifieth." 1 Cor. viii. 1.

4. When gifts are increased merely by virtue of continual study and industry,—when gifts proceed merely from natural parts, advantaged by education, study, and diligence; if gifts do merely proceed from that fountain, there may be much gifts, but little grace. The greatest scholars are not always the best men; the reason is, because their gifts are gotten by industry and diligence, — their gifts may be high when their graces are low.

The fifth position. There are cases wherein men may decay and be weak in gifts, and yet may be said to have strength of grace.

1. If it proceed merely from a natural, not a sinful defect. If weak gifts proceed from sinful defects, it argues grace is but weak, as if it proceeds from negligence, from sloth, from carelessness to attend upon ordinances, from idleness in not reading, in not meditating, not praying, not using holy conference, then grace decays with gifts, these are sinful defects; but now if gifts decay merely from natural defects, as a man of shallow capacity, of a slow speech, of a bad memory, of a weakly body, that, either through sickness or old age the body is weakened, in that there are natural decays in the body; because the putting forth of gifts depends upon the temperature and disposition of the body. As it is with an instrument of music that is out of tune, — it makes no melody though the instrument be good; so a body

out of tune hath not that use of or putting out of gifts. As it is with an old preacher; his gifts may decay when he is an old man, that he may not have such freedom of speech, such clearness of judgment, such strength of memory; as the body decays, the gift of elocution will decay, and his memory may decay, that he may not be so ready in delivering the word, but yet he may have as great ability in preaching, yea more experience, more solid judgment, and more clear understanding in the mysteries of the gospel, than a young man can have; so it is with Christians, their gifts may decay as the temper of the body decays; as it is with a musician; when he is a young man, his joints being more pliable, he plays more nimbly and melodiously upon an instrument of music; but when he comes to be an old man, he cannot play so nimbly and melodiously, his joints being stiff; but yet he hath more skill than a young man hath. When this doth not proceed from sinful defect, but from natural defects, then may a man's grace be strong, though his gifts and parts be weak.

2. If you want those external advantages to further and promote the growth of gifts: as for example, a Christian that follows an ordinary trade, who carries a water-tankard on his shoulder, he may attain more brokenness of heart, — more humility and self-denial, — more experience of the goodness of God toward his soul, and of the method of God, than he who perhaps is in some great, honourable, and eminent employment; but that Christian who hath that mean employment and such poor education, shall not attain those gifts that others have attained who have greater advantages. As it is with a scholar that hath been divers years at the university; he hath those external advantages, as education and literature, that his gifts and parts may be much increased; when perhaps a poor man that follows the plough may attain to more grace, and more accquaintance with the ways of God. Now, if such a man have not so

many gifts as others, it is not his sin; God doth not require more than he gives.

3. If you have not a calling to use or put forth the exercise of your gifts.— Your gifts may decay, though grace do not decay. Gifts are increased by exercise, — the less they are exercised the more they decay; if thou hast not an opportunity to exercise thy gifts as in former times, to pray in company, to use holy conference, as in former times thou hadst; in such a case, a Christian who is strong in grace may grow weaker in gifts.

4. If what you want in gifts you make up in humility.— Strength of grace is not to be measured by notions and speculations in the head, but by humility in the heart;— therefore, if thy gifts be weak, if thy humility be great, thou hast strength of grace: the less blossoms there are on the branches, the more sap there is in the root. He that hath great parts, and is proud of them, it is much to be feared hath less grace than that man who hath but few gifts and low parts, but, in the sense of his own weakness, hath low and self-denying thoughts of himself.

5. Lastly, If what you want in gifts you make up in your practice, by a holy conscionable walking. That martyr that said, *I cannot dispute, but I can burn for the truth*, had more grace than those that could dispute and not burn.

The application of this case is only for caution; and I shall give you a threefold caution.

1. *Caution.* — Take heed ye be not proud of the greatest measure of gifts you have. There is nothing in the world that a man is so apt to be proud of as his gifts: a man is not so apt to be proud of grace, because he hath a principle to check his pride; but he is apt to be proud of his gifts: a man is not so apt to be proud of outward endowments, as clothing, riches, and the like, as he is apt to be proud of his gifts. Expositors that do handle the prophecy of Ezekiel, they say that Ezekiel is called, ninety-three times, *Thou son of*

man, in that prophecy. Now, there is no other prophet that is mentioned in all the Bible, but only one, who is called *The Son of Man,* and that is Daniel. Dan. viii. 17. Now expositors give this reason why he is called by this title; because he was a prophet of the greatest gifts, and had the most glorious visions of all the other prophets. Compare this prophecy with Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Hosea, or all the rest; yet Ezekiel's prophecy is a more dark, mysterious, profound book. Now Ezekiel being a prophet of the greatest gifts, God takes this care to keep his heart low, —*Thou son of man, thou son of man* ; and all this to keep his heart low; which doth teach us thus much, That those that have great gifts, they ought to spend a great deal of time to keep their hearts humble and low; because there is a flatuous humour in our nature, whereby we are apt to swell and be puffed up in the sense of our own gift.

2. *Caution.* Prize a little grace before a great measure of gifts; ye will prize a pearl, though no bigger than a pea, more than a great heap of stones. There is great reason why we should prize a little grace before much gifts.

1. Grace will last when gifts are withering. Blazing comets will fall when the star never falls, — a falling star is no star, but only a comet; so the hypocrites may have a great blaze of their gifts, and yet may fall like comets that hover in the air. Grace is like a star that keeps fixed in its orb: there is a great deal of difference between a painted face and a natural complexion, — the painted face will not always last; but natural complexion, that will always remain. Gifts are but paint, the ornament of the creature; but true grace, which is as the natural complexion, that will remain.

2. Prize a little grace before much gifts, because gifts will leave thee short of Heaven. Christ told the learned scribe, That he was *not far from the*

kingdom of Heaven; but, alas! for all his gifts and learning, he fell short of Heaven. "Many will say to me," saith Christ, "in that day, Lord, Lord, have not we prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wondrous works?" Mat. vii. 22. You see it is observable, these men might pretend to high and great gifts; and yet they to whom God opened the secrets of his kingdom, against them he shut the gates of Heaven! A man may be a preacher, and have the secrets of Heaven opened to him, and yet have the gates of Heaven shut against him! A man may attain the gift in Christ's name to cast out Devils, a great and a miraculous gift; and yet those men that cast out Devils were themselves cast to Devils! *We have done many wondrous works*; they that did wonders were made a wonder; they that had so much gifts came short of Heaven, yea, they *who may preach to others, may themselves be castaways.*

3. Do not mistake strength of gifts to be strength of grace. It is certain, parents would not judge their children strong when their heads and breasts are big, and their feet but feeble; so you may grow big in your heads, in notions, and speculations, in gifts, and yet feeble in practice and grace. Now, that you may not mistake yourselves, and may not be deceived, I will shew you how you may know the difference betwixt those that have strong gifts, and those that have strong grace. In general take this: — As art resembles nature, so gifts resemble grace. Now, there are four differences: —

1. As grace strengthens, corruption weakens. It is with grace and lusts as it was with the house of Saul and the house of David; for *as David's house grew stronger and stronger, so Saul's house grew weaker and weaker.* As the ark was set up, Dagon was thrown down; — the Dagon of corruption will be thrown down before the ark of

grace, and the ark of the covenant; but gifts may strengthen, and yet corruptions never the weaker. Indeed, gifts discover corruption; but are not able to mortify and subdue it. Gifts discover many corruptions, but mortify none: — gifts take a cognizance of many a sin, but never put a period to any. Men that have gifts are resembled to the moon; and men that have grace are resembled to the sun: the moon hath an influence upon the water to make that move, to ebb and flow, — the moon sheds light upon all creatures, but no heat to make those creatures grow and spring; so a man of gifts may have light, but no heat in those gifts to make grace to grow, and make sin to fade and wither. Gracious men are like the sun, that doth not only give light but heat, by the influence thereof things spring and grow out of the earth. The great parts of a gifted man often occasionally strengthen his corruptions, but do not weaken them. Augustine could say, *Ignorant and illiterate men, they take Heaven; when others, with all their scholarship, go to Hell.*

2. Where there is strength of grace, there the heart is more humbled under the measures of grace received; — the stronger the graces are, the more the heart is humbled: but strength of parts in most men makes them proud and lofty. Empty vessels make the greatest noise, and so do shallow streams; so men that have great gifts are often empty of grace, 1 Cor. viii. 1. They are puffed up with pride, who have more gifts than grace; and by the humility of the soul you may know whether that soul be stronger in grace than in gifts.

3. He looks more after the supply of the grace he wants, than in a way of contentment in the grace he hath. This, argued Paul, hath much grace, when he thus speaks: "I do strive after more and more grace, if by any means I might

attain the resurrection of the dead" (Phil. iii. 13); that is, I do labour after perfection of grace, which those shall have that are raised from the dead and exalted in Heaven; but now a man that hath gifts, is more apt to look at what he hath than what he wanteth. Men of gifts are more apt to look upon their attainments than their imperfections; they look upon their gifts in a multiplying glass, more than they are; and, upon their failings, in an extenuating glass, less than they are.

4. The more grace any one hath, the more communicative he is, that others may be partakers of the same grace. When the apostle speaks of the duties of husbands and wives, he would have them further one another in the way to Heaven, "considering they are heirs together of the grace of God." 1 Peter iii. 7. Christ also speaks to Peter, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Luke xxii. 32, 33. By conversion is not meant God's first act in bringing Peter's soul home to Christ; but it is meant an establishing work of grace, as if Christ should have said,' Peter, now thy grace is weak, and it will be weaker by thy fall; but when thou art recovered from thy fall and denial of thy Master, then strengthen thy brethren, labour to strengthen the graces of other men, when thy graces are strong and thy strength recovered; and this is a very good evidence that thou hast not only grace, but strength of grace thyself, when thou art careful to strengthen others.' But such as have gifts only, with little or no grace, they are loth to communicate their gifts unto others; they would willingly monopolize their gifts, and grudge to impart them to others; they would not have other men have the like gifts with themselves, lest their glory should be darkened. They are not of John the Baptist's mind, who cared not though he decreased, so as Christ increased: but rather they are like to one Aspendius, a skilful

musician, who would never play on his instrument before any of his profession, lest they should learn his skill. This is a notable discovery whether thou hast strong grace or strong gifts only, which thou mayest know by thy willingness and readiness to communicate unto others what God hath imparted unto thee.

SERMON XIII.

Preached at St. Lawrence Jewry, London, the same day, 1651.

The same Text.

You have heard the first doctrine opened, viz. *That believers are not to be satisfied in weak measures of grace already received; but ought to endeavour to attain greater strength of grace.* — I shall now proceed to the improvement of this point, by making some application of it; and I shall direct the use to two sorts of Christians.

1. To such as are weak in the faith.

2. To such as are strong and grown Christians.

1. With weak believers I would leave these directions and consolations following: —

First. It is your wisdom to look more after the truth of your grace than after the measure of it. It is an error in many Christians, especially young converts, that they bring their graces rather to the balance than to the touchstone; they weigh them when they should try them. Peter being asked by Christ, "Simon, lovest thou me more than these?" (John xxi. 15.) — he answers, not about the measure of his love, but about the truth of his love, "Lord, I love thee, and thou knowest that I love thee." It is not the quantity or measure, but the nature and essence of grace, which is mainly considerable. If thou hast grace in truth and reality, it will increase: be sure thy grace be right, and, as the light shineth more and more to the perfect day, and as the nature of the leaven is, that it doth spread through the whole lump, so is grace; it is of a spreading and increasing nature; and, therefore, be careful thy grace for nature and for essence be true, and the measure of it will then increase.

Second. In finding out the truth of grace, we must not measure it so much by actions as affections and holy dispositions of heart, — the bent frame and tendencies of the heart, are the best discoverers of grace in the heart. When a Christian casts up all the stock of grace he hath, he will find that it doth consist more in desires than endeavours; and more in endeavours and attempts to perform holy duties, than in the performance itself. Natural life is more discernible by the heat than by the colour. A painter may counterfeit the one, but not the other. When the Lord Jesus is describing the beauty of his Spouse, he doth not say, How fair are thy looks!—but "how fair is thy love!" John xxi 15.

Third. Be not discouraged though men of glorious gifts fall away; for the poorest Christian that hath but the smallest measure of grace, shall never fall away. The gifts of a formalist may quickly wither, for they have their root in nature; but the graces of a true Christian shall never perish, because they have their root in Christ: "A Christian's life is hid with Christ" (Col. iii. 3) — hid in him as in a root, as in the fountain of life. A painted face may soon fade; but not so a true and natural complexion;—the varnish of a formal hypocrite is soon washed out; but when true grace, like a colour in grain, hath grown habitual in the soul, it is not removeable. Sooner will the sun discard its own beams than Christ will desert and destroy the least measure of true grace, which is a beam from that Sun of Righteousness.

Fourth. Improve your little grace well, — this is the way to have more. "To him that hath, shall it be given" (Luke xix. 26) *i. e.* more shall be given. God never gave any man a talent to hide it in a napkin. The least measure of grace is accountable for. Grace is improved,

1. When we ascribe all the glory of grace unto God; as he said right, "Lord, thy pound hath

gained ten pounds" (Luke xix. 16—18);—thy pound, and not my pains. We should do all to the praise of the glory of God's grace. If we give God the glory of his grace, he will give us the comfort of our grace, and the increase of it.

2. When for the edification and building up of others in their most holy faith.—To do good to others is the best way to get more good ourselves; the more the well is drawn, the more water comes, and the better the water is; so the more thy grace is exercised, the more grace thou wilt have, and the sweeter will the comfort be of thy grace.

Fifth. To weak Christians. Do not deny the truth of grace in your souls, because you cannot find the strength of grace in your souls. A poor weak man in a consumption, cannot lift up such a weight, nor can he bear such a burden as a man in strength and health can do, yet he hath life as well as the strongest man in the world. It may be day when it is not noon; thou mayst, in respect of spiritual estate, have the strength of a child, though not the strength of a man. It is not only an act of unthankfulness to God, but also of uncharitableness to a man's own soul, to conclude a nullity of grace from the weakness of it.

Sixth. Look not so much on your sins, but look upon your grace also, though weak grace. Weak Christians look more on their sins than on their graces, yet God looks on their graces, and overlooks their sins and infirmities. Saith the Holy Ghost, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job." James v. 13. He might also have said, *Ye have heard of the impatience of Job*; but God reckons of his people, not by what is bad in them, but by what is good in them. Mention is made of Rahab's entertainment of the spies; but no mention is made that she told the lie when she did so;—that which was well done was mentioned to her praise, and what was amiss is buried in silence, or at least is not recorded against her and charged

upon her. He that drew the picture of Alexander, with his scar on his face, drew him with his finger on his scar. God lays the finger of mercy upon the scars of our sins. Oh! it is good serving such a Master, who is ready to reward the good we do, and is ready to forgive and pass by what is amiss; and, therefore, thou that hast but a little grace, yet remember, God will have his eye on that little grace, — "he will not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed." Mat. xii. 20.

Seventh. Learn this for thy comfort, that tho' thou hast but a little grace, yet that little grace shall not be extinguished by thy strong corruption, but at last it shall over-master your corruptions. What was said of Esau and Jacob? "The one shall be stronger than the other, and the elder shall serve the younger" (Gen. xxv. 23); and so it came afterwards to pass in the time of Jehoshaphat, when there was no king in Edom" (1 Kings xxii. 47): that may be fitly applied to the affairs of the soul, the elder shall serve the younger, — corruption in the soul is elder than grace in the soul; and corruption is so opposite to grace, that it labours for the extinction of grace; but this spark will live in the midst of the sea of corruption, till at last that great deep shall be made dry, and the house of David shall at last quite put down the house of Saul, — the name of the Lord will perform this! — and, therefore, thou that art but a weak Christian, learn to stay thyself on the name of the Lord, till judgment be brought forth unto victory.

2. Use of this doctrine is, unto strong believers, such as have attained unto a higher form of grace in the school of Christ.

1. Though you are strong in grace, yet remember it is not the grace of God in you, but the free grace of God towards you, by which you are justified. It is not our inherent righteousness, but the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ that is

our justification. Oh, consider, you that have most grace, what would become of you were it not for free grace! Free grace is the surest and only refuge for a soul to fly unto! God can find matter of condemnation against you, not only for your worst sins, but your best duties. The best Christian hath no reason to venture his soul on the best thought that ever he conceived, nor on the most holy duty that ever he performed, nor on the highest grace he ever exercised. A famous instance hereof we have in Nehemiah, who had much grace, and did much for God, his people, his house, his cause, yet prays after all this, "Spare me, according to the greatness of thy mercy!" (Neh. xiii. 22) intimating, that God might find therein matter enough to ruin him, if God did not spare him for his mercy's sake. So Paul, in the discharge of his ministry, proceeded with so much uprightness, that he speaks thus of himself: "I know nothing of myself; yet am I not hereby justified." 1 Cor. iv. 4. He knew that all the grace, excellency, and uprightness in him would not make him righteous in the sight of God. We read of Jehoshaphat, that when he had mustered up all the strength, which was very great, for he had "eleven hundred thousand men in his militia" (2 Chron. xvii. 19) he goes to God, and prays, "Lord, we have no might or power against these multitudes, and we know not what to do, only our eyes are up to thee" (2 Chron. xx. 12): so when a Christian hath mustered up all the strength of his grace, and considers the great power of his corruptions which do set themselves against him, he had best go to God and say, Lord, I have no power against these many and great corruptions; but my eyes are to thy grace, that thou mayest help me. As in a pair of compasses one foot is fixed in the centre, whilst the other turns about the circumference, so must the soul fix and stay itself on Christ while it is exercised about holy duties. Though Christ (as formerly I mentioned)

commended many parts of the Spouse, yet not her hands (Cant. iv. 1—8); to teach us, that all the spouse could do, could make her amiable in the eyes of Christ; not the Spouse's working for Christ, but Christ's work in the Spouse made her beautiful. Oh, it is very hard, through strength of grace, to abound in the work of the Lord, and yet keep the heart humbled! and, therefore,

II. Consider, they that have most grace, yet have great cause to be humbled, and that in many respects.

1. Thou hast not so much grace and perfection as once thou hadst. Once man was beautified and bespangled with many glorious perfections: before the Fall it might have been said of man, that he *was perfect as his heavenly Father is perfect*; for God made man upright, that is, perfect; nothing was wanting then to make man both an happy and holy creature; but, alas, the image of God in us is now obliterated and defaced.

2. He that hath most grace, hath not so much as he shall have in Heaven. "Not that I am perfect already, but I forget those things that are behind, and I press forward unto those things that are before; yea, I press (saith the apostle) toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Phil iii. 12, 14. We read, under the law, of several things that were to be a cubit and a half high and broad (Exod. xxv. 10) it being an imperfect measure; it was to note, that no man in this life hath an exactness and perfection (the error of the familistical perfectionists, very pernicious); the uttermost that is attainable by us in this life is but imperfect. In this life there is a *plus ultra*, something still to be attained in religion; but in Heaven men shall be "perfect" (Heb. xii. 23); we shall in Heaven "be like to Jesus Christ" (1 John iii. 2); whom, though we now see but darkly, and in a glass, — then we shall see him as he is.

3. They that have much grace, yet should be humbled, — for there are those that have more grace than you, and yet have had less time and fewer advantages than you have; there are those that have gone before you for strength of grace, and yet have come behind you for the means of grace: there are those who were the last and are first (Mat. xx. 16.) and before you.

4. Be humbled under much grace, for ye have not so much grace as you should have had, considering the means of grace you have lived under. How many years have you been in the school of Christ, and yet what little proportionable progress have you made in the knowledge of Jesus Christ! we may all blush to think what dunces we have been in the school of Christ! The trees of the garden should bear more fruit than the trees of the forest: the fig-tree, therefore, which was unfruitful (Luke xiii. 6, 7) was the more intolerable, because it was in the garden in the vineyard.— What the apostle complains of the Hebrews, we ourselves may justly take up the complaint against ourselves, that "For the time, we ought to have been teachers; and yet have need that one teach us again what are the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." Hebrews v. 12.

5. They that have much grace, and are strong in grace, yet have cause to be humble, because it is likely they had more grace and did more good heretofore than now; and who is there almost that is not decayed, that hath not in some degree or other "left their first love?" Rev. ii. 5. Have you not had (I speak to grown and experienced Christians) more love and zeal to God, more hatred of sin, more grief for sin, more fear of offending God than now you have? Are there not many that have and do express less desire after duty, less fervency, less frequency, delight in holy duties than formerly?

Alas! how many, through pride and spiritual improvidence, through neglect of the ordinances and worldly-mindedness, have much abated in their spiritual estate!

6. Be humbled, that though you be strong in grace, yet you have many corruptions in you more strong than many graces. More are our vain thoughts than our meditations; and more are the things we are ignorant of than the things we know. Corruption is strong enough to keep grace low; but, in the best, grace is not strong enough to bring corruption under. "When we would do good, evil is present and powerful with us" (Rom. vii. 21) to hinder us from doing of good: but when we are doing of evil, good is not present to hinder us from that evil; we are more in sinning than in obeying. Our corruptions are like Goliath, our grace as David: We exercise more kinds of sins than graces; as in a field there are more briars and thorns than useful trees, and in a garden more unprofitable weeds than roses and lilies,—so in the souls of the best there are whole swarms of vain, earthly, and sinful thoughts, when there are but very few holy and heavenly thoughts.

7. Another argument why strong Christians should be humble is this, That though they may have grace, yet they are subject to fall into that sin which is most contrary to that grace wherein they are most eminent. Abraham was most eminent for faith; he is said "to be strong in faith" (Rom. iv. 20); he is called *The Father of the Faithful*. "They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham" (Gal. iii. 9); and yet for all this, Abraham fell into distrust of God's providence and power when he spake untruly, and "denied his wife." Gen. xx. 2. So Job was renowned for his patience: "You have heard of the patience of Job" James v. 11) saith St. James; and, yet we read, in the story of Job's trials, that his impa-

tience did break out in many rash speeches and wishes. Job vi. 9. So Moses was eminently meek: it was said of him, "The man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (Num. xii. 3); and yet it is said of him, "that his spirit was provoked, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips" (Psalm cvi. 33); and you shall find even meek Moses thus expostulating with God himself, "I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me; and if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand: and if I have found favour in thine eyes, let me not see my wretchedness." Num. xi. 14, 15.

8. This further consideration may also humble us, that in the highest and greatest exercise of grace there is much mixture of sin. We may observe, that even those good actions, for which many of the people of God are recorded in Scripture, are yet blemished with some notable defect. Rahab's faith in entertaining the spies was blemished with this failing, in telling a lie concerning them. It was also good what the midwives did when they refused to obey that bloody decree of the king of Egypt, and would not kill the male children of the Hebrews (Exod. i. 17, 19); and yet they miscarried, as some observe, in their answer to the king when they made their excuse. We are apt to mingle sin with the best action we do, and so apt to plough with an ox and an ass; and our corruptions are apt to discover themselves, even while we are upon the exercise of our graces.

III. Let the strong labour to be more strong, that so they may be "strengthened with all might according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness" (Col. i. 11); —and therefore it is that the apostle prays for the Romans, "that they may be filled by the God of hope, with all joy and peace in believing, that they might abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost;" and yet, in the next verse, he told

them, "I myself am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye are full of goodness, and that ye are filled with all knowledge" (Rom. xv. 13, 14); and, as he prays for the Romans, upon the same terms he presseth the Thessalonians, of whom he thus speaks: — "Now, as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you, for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another; — and, indeed, you do it towards all the brethren which are in all Macedonia; but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more." 1 Thes. iv. 9, 10. "The righteous (saith Job) shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." Job xvii. 9.

To quicken you hereunto, consider,

1. *The more grace we have on earth, the more glory we shall have in Heaven.* "As God doth unequally dispense his gifts in this life, so accordingly he crowns." Now, there are degrees of torments in Hell, the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, "who devoured widows' houses, and for a pretence made long prayers" (Mat. xxiii. 14) are doomed by Christ himself to receive "greater damnation;" and that servant "who knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." Luke xii. 47. Now, if there are different degrees of torment in Hell, then surely there are different degrees of glory in Heaven, and those according to different degrees of grace here on earth.

2. It is of the nature of grace to grow and increase; and, therefore, if thou hast grace, either in truth of it or in the strength of it, it will certainly grow. Grace in Scripture is compared to a grain of mustard-seed, the least of seeds, which afterwards sprouts and springs so, as that it becomes the largest of plants. In the same chapter grace is compared unto leaven, which, "being

put into a heap of meal, leaveneth the whole" (Mat. xiii. 31, 32, 33); so grace (as I touched before) in the heart, is of a spreading nature, and will diffuse itself into all the parts, powers, and faculties of soul and body. Christians are, therefore, compared to the branches of a vine (John xv. 5) which of all trees grows most, and brings forth most fruit. A picture doth not grow, but a living child will grow.

3. Such as are strong Christians should yet grow more and more, because in this world there is no stint and measure set for spiritual growth; the *maximum quod sic* of a Christian is this: — he must grow in grace till his head reach up to Heaven, till grace be perfected in glory.

4. Shall worldlings set no bounds to their desires after wealth and land, and yet wilt thou take up with poor measures of grace for religion? (If you have said, It is sufficient, you have finished); the ordinary answer of ignorant people is, what? must we be wiser than our forefathers? — and yet those people would be richer than their forefathers were, and those that have great wealth left them by their forefathers, yet are not satisfied with it unless they increase their estate: let this shame that slothfulness and supine negligence of many, who content themselves with measures of grace.

5. And lastly, Consider, that those who were eminent for grace, in what esteem were they in the church of God, and with what honourable mention are they recorded in the word of God! such are remembered to be of note in the church of God. Rom xvi. 7. See what an eulogium the Holy Ghost gives Job, "that there was none like him in the earth." Job i. 8. God loves those that are singularly and excellently good; an ordinary pitch doth not so please him. "What do ye more than others?" Mat. v. 46. Solomon was so renowned for wisdom, that it is said, "That

amongst many nations there was no king like him" (Nehem. xiii. 26); that is, for wisdom:—so Hezekiah was eminent for trusting in God, who feared not to break in pieces the brazen serpent, but trusted in God: "none like him of all the kings of Judah" (2 Kings xviii. 4, 5); and so eminent was the zeal of good Josiah after a thorough reformation, that he is also crowned with this commendation: "And like him there was no king before him that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might." 2 Kings xxiii. 25. By all which instances, it is clear, of what honourable esteem have the eminent particular graces of God's servants been in the sight of the Lord.

SERMON XIV.

Preached at St. Lawrence Jury, London, April 27, 1652.

The same Text.

HAVING, in the last foregoing sermons, treated of grace in its strength and growth, I am come to speak to this additional clause in the text, viz. *That is in Christ Jesus;* which passage is here inserted by the apostle, that he might let Timothy know to whom he was beholden for all the grace he had received, even unto Jesus Christ. In the tenth verse, he speaks of salvation *that is in Christ Jesus;* and here of grace that is in Christ Jesus; to note,

1. That Jesus Christ is the fountain and foundation both of grace and glory. Jesus Christ gives grace; and Jesus Christ gives also *salvation with eternal glory,* verse 10.

2. That those who receive grace from Christ Jesus, shall also receive salvation by him; for there is an inseparable union between grace and glory.

The grace of God that is in Christ Jesus.— Grace may be said to be in Christ,

1. As a subject recipient; and so Christ is said to be "full of grace and truth; he had the Spirit without measure" (John i. 14, and iii. 34); "it pleased the Father, that in him all fulness should dwell." Col. i. 19.

2. In Christ Jesus, as a fountain redundant, overflowing and ever flowing to his people; "for of his fulness we receive grace for grace." John i. 16.

Again, When it is said that grace is in Christ Jesus, we must consider Christ,

1. As God co-essential with the Father; and he is the Author and Giver of grace, and of every good and perfect gift.

2. Consider him as mediator God-man, and so he is the purchaser and procurer of grace, and of all the blessings of the New Covenant; for "the blessing of Abraham cometh upon the Gentiles, *en to Christo*, through Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 14); so that by this phrase, *in Christ Jesus*, there are three things implied.

1. That Christ Jesus is the Author and Giver of grace; he only is the "Author and Finisher of faith (Heb. xii.) and every faith in his people.

2. That Christ is the purchaser of grace; so that all the grace that is bestowed upon us by God, it is through Christ, and for his sake: grace is from Christ as a fountain, and by Christ as a conduit.

3. That Christ is the preserver of grace, all the grace that is in us is in Christ Jesus; he keeps all our graces for us: as the beams of the sun may be said to be in the sun, because they are preserved by their union with the sun. "Our life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 3); hid as the life of a tree is hid in the root; and the being of a stream is hid in the fountain:—and herein is the comfort of believers, that their condition is more stable, immutable, and safe, than ever Adam's was in innocency; for he had all the perfections of a creature, but they were in his own keeping; but now, all the grace that is in a believer is in Christ Jesus, by whom and in whom grace is safely preserved, so as it shall never perish.

The point of doctrine I observe from these words, is this,—

That all those measures of grace, whereof believers are partakers, they receive them in and from Jesus Christ.

In the handling of which point, I will thus proceed :—

1. Shew you the truth of it.

2. Give you the reasons and grounds of it.

Now to prove that all grace is received in and through Christ,

1. I will shew the truth of this by many resemblances, to which Christ is compared in the Scripture.

2. By many types of Christ in the Old Testament.

3. By many express testimonies in the New Testament concerning this truth.

1. There are many resemblances in Scripture which do illustrate this, that all agree is from Christ Jesus.

1. He is compared to a root:—"He is called *the Root of Jesse*" (Isaiah xi. 10); not only because he came of the 'stock of David,' but that he gives grace to Jew and Gentile that do believe; for *to him shall the Jew and Gentiles seek*, as it follows in the next words. Now that the prophet there speaks of Christ, is plain by the apostle's express application of that prophecy unto Christ, calling him the "Root of Jesse, in whom the Gentiles should trust" (Rom. xv. 12); — and Christ speaks of himself, "I am the Vine. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me" (John xv. 1, 4.); the life, sap, nourishment, growth, and fruitfulness of a branch, is altogether from the root, with which the branches have union and communion.

2. Christ is called the Head of his People: "He is the head of the body of the church." Col. i. 18. Now, as sense and motion are derived from the head to the members of the body, so also is grace derived from Jesus Christ to every true believer, — every living member of his body.

3. Christ is called the "Sun of Righteous-

ness" (Mal. iv. 2); because as heat and light are communicated by the sun to things here below, so there is a sweet influence of grace from Christ upon believers. As, by virtue of the sun's influence, the vegetable and sensible creatures live, move, and grow,—so also the life and growth of grace in the soul is from that divine influence which Jesus Christ doth shed upon believers.

4. Christ is compared to a fountain: "even a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." Zech. xiii. 1. So that as water doth stream forth in the river from the fountain, so grace flows down from Jesus Christ upon believers, who is a fountain, where all fulness of grace for ever dwells, and from whence all grace is drawn and derived; and this is the first proof.

2. This truth may be demonstrated by the many types of Christ in the Old Testament which did shadow out unto us this, That all grace is from Jesus Christ. I shall mention some:—

1. Aaron, the high priest, was to lay his "hands on the people, and to bless them" (Lev. ix. 22); and herein he was a type of Christ, our great and heavenly High Priest, thro' whom we are blessed with all grace. "God having blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus." Eph. i. 3. "Christ is sent by God to bless his people, and to turn every one of them from their iniquities" (Acts iii. 26); and, therefore, it is recorded by St. Luke, that a little before the ascension of our blessed Saviour, "he laid his hands upon his disciples, and blessed them" (Luke xxiv. 50); and so he doth still bless all true believers with the spiritual blessing of grace.

2 Another type of Christ was Joseph, who, in many things, was a type of Christ. "Joseph was the best beloved of his father's children, Gen. xxxvii. 3; so was Jesus Christ "the Son of his

Father's love." Mat. iii. 17, and Col. i. 13. Joseph was hated of his brethren, and sold for twenty pieces of silver" Gen. xxxvii. 20, 21); so was Jesus Christ; "he came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John i. 12); he was rejected by them, and *sold for thirty pieces of silver.* Joseph "was carried into Egypt" (Gen. xxxvii. 28); and so persecution "drove Christ into Egypt presently after he was born." Mat ii. 20. Joseph was falsely accused and condemned" (Gen. xxxix. 20); so was Christ. Joseph's troubles ended in his advancement; so all the troubles of Christ "wrought for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; God having, therefore, highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name," Phil. ii. 9 (for now Christ is set down at the right hand of the Father; but especially in this, Joseph did type out Jesus Christ, that, in that dreadful lasting famine in Egypt, Joseph had the custody of all the corn in the land; and he had the issuing out of all the provision for bread in all the land of Egypt (Gen. xli. 55, 56, 57); — so the Lord Jesus is the Lord Keeper of all that store of grace with which believers are furnished; which grace is given to help them in time of need. Jesus Christ hath the key of David, — he hath the key of the treasury of grace.

3. Another type of Jesus Christ was Joshua, who gave unto Israel entrance and possession of the good land of Canaan, and all the promised blessings of it; so Jesus Christ gives unto his people better things than milk and honey of Canaan. "He will give grace and glory; and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Psa. lxxxiv. 11. Our Jesus gives his people a "better rest" (Heb. iv. 8, 9) than ever Joshua brought Israel unto.

4. Another type of Christ was the candlestick of the tabernable, — the seven lamps whereof did

give light unto the whole tabernacle! Now, these "seven lamps" (Exod. xxv. 37, and Zech. iv. 2) what did they type out but the graces of the Spirit of Christ; for so it is said, that there were "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God?" Rev. iv. 5. The Holy Ghost and the graces of it, being so described by seven Spirits in this regard; because of the variety and perfection of that grace which is in the Lord Jesus; and by his Spirit communicated to all his members.

3. The third proof of this doctrine may be drawn from the consideration of those clear testimonies of this truth in the New Testament. St John speaks thus of Christ: That "of his fulness we have all received,—and grace for grace." John i. 16. In Christ there is not only plenty, but bounty,—not only an abundance of all grace, but a redundance of grace. Christians have the fulness of a vessel; but Christ hath the fulness of a fountain. Take a drop of water out of a vessel, and it is not so full as before; but draw as much water as you please out of the well of the water of life, and there is no want of water. From Christ we receive *grace for grace*; that is, say some, the grace of the New Testament added to that grace which was revealed under the Old Testament; or *grace for grace*; that is, say others, a perfection of grace, according to the perfection that is in Christ. A perfection of parts, not of degrees. As in a natural generation the child doth receive from his father limb for limb, and part for part,—so in this spiritual regeneration, Jesus Christ "the everlasting Father" (Isaiah ix. 6) doth give grace for grace:—or you may understand this expression *grace for grace*, that Jesus Christ is not only the author of grace, but gives *grace for grace*; that is, one grace after another, *grace upon grace*; the being of grace, and the increase of grace (grace heaped on new grace) are both from Christ. This also appears, that Christ is the Author and

Bestower of all grace, by that ordinary prayer wherewith the apostle doth usually close up his epistles, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." 2 Cor. xiii. 14. The like prayer we have to the Romans, to the Galatians, "Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." Rom. xvi. 24. and Gal. vi. 18. So also in the close of the epistles to the Philippians, Thessalonians, and to Timothy: "Grace be with thee. Amen." Phil. iv. 23. All this is to note that Jesus Christ is the Fountain from whence, and the Conduit by whom all grace is conveyed unto believers; — as in the vision that the prophet Zechary saw, "There were two olive branches, which, through the two golden pipes, did empty the golden oil out of themselves" (Zech. iv. 12); so Jesus Christ, that true olive-tree, doth drop and distil grace upon his church, whereby they receive from his fulness grace for grace.

But in giving this honour unto Christ, do you not derogate from God the Father, when you say that all grace is from Christ?

1. It is no derogation to God the Father to ascribe this unto Christ, because *it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.*

2. And beside, *Christ and the Father are one.* In saying all grace is from Christ, we also say, all is from the Father too; and in saying, It is from the Father, we say It is from Christ too; — and, therefore, it is an ordinary power prefixed in the beginning of most of the epistles: "Grace be unto you, from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ." Col. i. 19. John x. 30. Rom. i. 7. 1 Cor. i. 3. 2 Cor. i. 2. Gal. i. 3. Eph i. 2. Phil. i. 2. Col. i. 2. 1 Thes. i. 1, &c. So that in the subscription, and in the inscription of each epistle, grace is ascribed to God the Son, but so as not excluding God the Father, and to God the Father not excluding the Son.

3. And then again, Jesus Christ is commissioned and designed by the Father, to give out grace to his people: for so Christ speaks of himself, "I came down from Heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." John vi. 38. Now, it is the will of God that from Christ believers should receive justifying and sanctifying grace. "Our sanctification is God's will" (1 Thes. iv. 3) and Christ came to fulfil that will of God; for so speaks the apostle: "Sacrifice and offering, and burnt-offerings, and offering for sin, thou wouldest not, neither hast pleasure therein; then said I, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God; by which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all" (Heb. x. 9, 10): — so that the will of God the Father, and the will of Jesus Christ are the same in the bestowing of grace. Jesus Christ received a commission from God the Father, to bestow grace upon his people; and will you see how that commission runs, you shall find it in the prophet Isaiah: — "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Isaiah lxi. 1. Christ had a commission under his Father's hand and seal, "for him hath the Father sealed." John vi. 27. Joseph received authority from Pharaoh; and it was no dishonour to Pharaoh that Joseph was commissioned to issue out all the stores of corn to the Egyptians in the time of the famine: — no more is it any dishonour to the Father that Jesus Christ doth bestow and convey grace upon believers.

But doth not this put the Spirit out of office, who is called the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit of Grace, because he doth work grace and holiness in the hearts of the people of God?

What Christ is said to work, that the holy

Spirit also doth; because by the Spirit of God Christ worketh. It is a good rule that the works of the blessed Trinity *ad extra* are undivided; all those works which are external, and relative to the creatures, as to create, preserve, redeem, sanctify, &c. are in respect of the things wrought equally common to all the persons of the blessed Trinity; so that we may say, "whatsoever things the Father doth, those things doth the Son likewise (John v. 19) and those things also doth the Holy Ghost; the work of sanctification is equally ascribed unto all the persons: — "God the Father sanctifies his people." Jude, ver. 1. God the Son doth sanctify his members, for he is their sanctification. I Cor. i. 30. "He loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, through the word" (Eph. v. 25, 26); — and yet the work of sanctification is most frequently ascribed to the Holy Ghost; goodness, righteousness, and truth, and indeed all grace, being called the "Fruit of the Spirit" (Eph. v. 9, and Gal. v. 22); — and the Spirit is called *The Spirit of Grace and Supplication, and the Spirit of Holiness and Sanctification:* — so our regeneration is ascribed unto God the Father: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope" (1 Peter i. 3); and so also we are the children of Christ by regeneration; for, in this respect, Christ is called the "Father of eternity." Isaiah ix. 6. *Behold* (saith the prophet in the name of Christ) *I and the children which thou hast given me;* and that there the prophet speaks of Christ, is clear from the application of it to him in the epistle to the Hebrews; "Behold, I and the children which God hath given me." Isaiah viii. 18, and Heb. ii. 13. — Neither is the Holy Ghost excluded from this working of grace and regeneration in us; for Christ tells

Nicodemus, that "except a man be born again, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John iii. 3.); so it is said that God the Father blessed Abraham; and yet the blessing of Abraham came upon the Gentiles through Christ, that they might receive the "promise of the Spirit." Gal. iii. 14. By all which instances it doth appear, that though there are diversities of gifts, yet the same Spirit; and though there are differences of administrations, yet the same Lord Jesus Christ, the Author of all grace through the holy Spirit.

2. The reason and ground of this, why Jesus Christ is the Author, Purchaser and Conveyer of grace to his people, is,

1. Because God the Father hath appointed Jesus Christ, as Mediator, to transact the great work of sanctifying and saving his elect.

2. Because by this shall the reproach be rolled away from Christ, who in his life-time was reputed the greatest of all malefactors, and accordingly suffered death; they were wont to say, *Can any good come out of Nazareth?* God hath, therefore, given *him a name above all names,* that he should not only *be anointed with oil above his fellows,* by his receiving the *Spirit without measure,*—but that the oil that was *poured upon the head of our High Priest should run down upon the skirts of his garments*; and that grace, which was abundant in him, should also be redundant to his church, and run down, and diffuse itself to all his members.

3. To manifest that Jesus Christ was the second Adam, and came into the world to repair the breaches which the sin of the first Adam had made; for by the Fall we did not only contract upon ourselves the guilt of Adam's sin, to take off which we have the need of the righteousness of Christ imputed, but we have drawn upon ourselves the filthiness and pollution of sin, to take away the power, whereof only the grace, holiness, and inhe-

rent righteousness of Christ imputed to us doth avail;—and as the first Adam was the author and conveyer both of the guilt, filthiness, and punishments of sin to his posterity,—so Jesus Christ, the second Adam, conveys the life of grace in all his. As the first Adam was the author to communicate natural life, as he *was made a living soul*, — so the second Adam did communicate the spiritual life of grace, as he was made "a quickening spirit." 1 Cor. xv. 45, 46, 47, 48, 49. From the first Adam, by natural generation and propagation, we receive corruption for corruption, — so from the second Adam we receive grace for grace.

The first use of this doctrine is for confutation.

1. Of the Socinians error, who say that all grace in Christ, whether his active or passive righteousness, was only to qualify his person, and to merit his own glorification, without any reference unto us, unless as an exemplar or pattern; — but this opinion is sufficiently confuted by this doctrine, by which hath been shewn that as all our grace is from Christ, so that abundance of grace that is in Christ is for us. As the woman hath abundance of milk in her breast, not for herself, but for her child; and the sun hath abundance of light, not for itself, but for the world, — so Jesus Christ is full of grace and truth; but this fulness is in order to the filling of his members: — as in the natural body, there are some special parts that do stand as officers unto all the rest; the stomach receives much meat, not for itself, but that it might communicate it to all the members; the head hath the senses seated in it, not for itself, but for the whole body,—so it is in the mystical body, whereof Christ is the head; the abundance of grace, which is treasured up in Christ, is in order to supply every member with grace. "For their sakes (saith Christ himself of his elect) I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." John xvii. 19. — Some do refer this to Christ, as

being set apart to the office of Mediator, that it was not for his own sake, but for the sake of his members; and though there be grace enough in Christ to qualify his person, yet also there is grace enough in him to justify our persons too, and sanctify our natures.

2. This also reproves the error, pride, and folly of the Pelagians, Papists, and Arminians, who derogate from God, and arrogate to themselves. These people, like Sampson, have lost their spiritual strength, but do not, will not know that it is departed from them; they are poor, and yet are proud, and while they are "setting up the praise of nature, they do prove themselves the enemies of grace." Augustine. Alas! while they boast of a free will, they have cause to bewail the bondage of the will, as Luther calls it. It is true, men by the fall did not lose the faculty itself, but he hath lost the rectitude of it; — and yet proud man will be like the spider, spinning out a thread of his own, and thinking to climb up to Heaven by threads spun out of his own bowels; but let such who rejoice in this (*Mihi soli debeo*) take heed at last "that his hope be not cut off, and that his trust become not like a spider's web." Job viii. 14. Alas, poor proud wretch! who made thee to differ? Grevincovius, the Arminian, makes this proud answer to the apostle's question,—*I myself made myself to differ.* This is divinity much like that of the heathens. Seneca said, *That we live, that is of God; but that we live well, that is of ourselves*; — and, Cicero hath also this saying, and he tells us that it is the judgment of all men, *That prosperity and success is from God, and must be sought of God; but wisdom, that is gotten by ourselves*; — which gave Augustine occasion to pass this censure upon him,—*Cicero in endeavouring to make men free, he made them sacrilegious.* But let us take heed of this proud leaven of Arminianism,

and learn from hence to be convinced of the emptiness as well as insufficiency of our nature, to any supernatural good; for, alas! *we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.* We have no grace but what we receive from Christ; *and grace is noway grace, unless it be every way free.* We have little reason to boast of the freedom of our will to any thing that is spiritually good, because our will is not free till it be by grace made free. (Augustine). We have no power to become the sons of God *till it be given us to believe on his name; and such are born not of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

SERMON XV.

Preached at St Lawrence Jury, London, the same day, 1651; being the last Sermon that Mr. Love preached on the Lord's Day, as well as the Conclusion of this Course of Sermons.

The same Text.

From the last clause in this text, viz. *Grace that is in Christ Jesus*, we have gathered this observation, That

All those measures of grace whereof believers are partakers, they do receive them in and from Jesus Christ.

That this is so, we have proved, not only by the types of the Old Testament, but also by the express testimony of the New Testament; and have also given the grounds and reasons of this point, with some application, by way of reproof and confutation of the Arminian and Socinian errors. It remains for me to make some further application of this point; and so conclude the whole discourse.

2. Use is, by way of exhortation, unto these duties following: —

1. Dost thou receive all thy grace from Jesus Christ? Then labour to be humble in the acknowledgement of this. Let the consideration and conscientious application of this doctrine quell all boasting in us of an excellency received. "Our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, are all from Christ; and, therefore, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord!" 1 Cor. i. 30, 31. Consider, — "Who maketh thee to differ from another?" — and, "What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" 1 Cor. iv. 7. Who, but a proud

fool, would magnify himself in that which either another giveth him, or another hath done for him? We count it an odious pride and folly in a man to boast himself of that which another hath done; and, therefore, the apostle professeth that he did not carry himself as those false teachers had done, who were crept into the church of Corinth. Saith the apostle, "We do not boast of things beyond our measure; that is, of other mens' labours, nor boast in another man's line of things made ready to our own hand." 2 Cor. x. 15, 16. Now, all grace is made ready to our hands, and is only the work of Jesus Christ in us, *who worketh all our works for us.* Ammianus Marcellinus tells us of one Lampadius, a great person in Rome, who, in all parts of the city, where other men had bestowed cost in building, he would set up his own name, not as a repairer of the work, but as the chief builder: *I and my God.* — Such folly are they guilty of, who will set their own names before God's over the work of grace in their own souls! "Oh, remember, that boasting is excluded by the law of faith." Rom. iii. 27. Faith is that grace which emptieth the creature of all its conceited excellencies, and faith is that grace which will give God the praise of the glory of all his grace. Shall the groom of the stable boast of his master's horses, and the stage-player of his borrowed robes? Shall the mud-wall be proud that the sun shines upon it? We must say of all the good that is in us, as the young man said to the prophet of his hatchet, "Alas! master, it was borrowed!" 2 Kings vi. 5. The church of God is compared to the "moon." Cant. vi. 10. Now all the light which the moon giveth to the world, doth but *distribute what is lent her*; — all our graces and the shining of them, whereby our light is seen before men, is but a borrowed light from the Sun of Righteousness. David sets us an excellent pattern, when he makes that humble acknowledgment, "Blessed

be the Lord God of Israel, our Father, for ever and ever! Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty, for all that is in Heaven or on Earth is thine! Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as Head above all! Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thy hand is power and might; and in thy hand is to make great, and to give strength unto all! Now, therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name! But who am I, and what is my people, that we should offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee, O Lord our God. All this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name, cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own!" (1 Chron. xxix. 10—16); which is an excellent pattern of humility after enlargement in duty. David and the people offered both bountifully and willingly towards the house of God; the Lord had enlarged both their hearts and their hands. Now all they did for God, is here ascribed to God's grace and bounty towards them. It is excellent humility to ascribe our enlargement in God's service to the enlargement of God's grace towards us, — the way to have grace increased, is humbly to acknowledge from whence we receive every grace.

2. Ascribe unto Jesus Christ the glory of all the grace you have been made partakers of. Thus did Paul upon all occasions: "I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was in me; and by the grace of God I am what I am." 1 Cor. xv. 10. "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." Gal. ii. 20. It was well done of that good and faithful servant to say, "Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds" (Luke xix. 16): he doth not say, *Lord, my pains, but thy pound*

hath gained. When we give God the glory of his grace, God will give us the comfort and increase of our grace. Learn, therefore, to ascribe unto Christ the initial, progressive, and consummative work of grace in your souls: "Jesus Christ only, who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until his own day." Phil. i. 6. — Jesus Christ is "the Author and Finisher of our faith" (Heb. xii. 2): he is the "Alpha and the Omega" (Rev. i. 8); and, therefore, the apostle prays, "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Jesus Christ, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, and settle you." 1 Pet. v. 10. Grace is rather like manna that comes from Heaven, than the corn that grows out of the earth. Grace is inspired from Heaven. Gifts and parts are acquired by industry and pains here on earth. What God said, by way of comparison between Canaan and Egypt, is very applicable to this purpose; for thus the Lord speaks to Israel: "The land, whether thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, whence thou camest out, where thou sowest thy seed, and waterest it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs; but the land whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and vallies, and drinketh water of the rain of Heaven; — a land which the Lord thy God careth for." Deut. xi. 10. 11, 12. Thus it is with grace and nature. Nature may be, and is improved with industry and pains, and is like Egypt, which might be watered by the foot; *i. e.* with digging gutters and trenches, which is the labour of the foot, to let in the stream of the river Nilus, when he yearly overflows his banks; — but grace is like the rain from Heaven, which only falleth where God doth appoint, who causeth it to rain upon one city, and not upon another; and one piece is rained upon: and the piece whereon it raineth not withereth. Amos iv. 7.

3. Disclaim all merit and self-sufficiency; for

so much as we arrogate to our own merit, so much we derogate from the free grace and mercy of God. If, with Ephraim, God hath enlarged his grace towards thee, that "thou art like a green olive-tree," yet let God have the glory of all thy fruitfulness; and let him say, "From me is thy fruit found." Hos. xiv. 6, 8. O, consider, 'that thou bearest not the root, but the root thee!' Rom. xi. 18. Say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name do we give the praise!" A gracious heart knows his own inability, and his own insufficiency and imperfection, that he is unable to overcome the least sin, though ever so small, — to exercise any grace, though ever so weak, — to perform the least duty, though ever so easy; and as we have cause to acknowledge our inability, so also our sinful inperfections; if God should enter into judgment with us, he might condemn us, not only for our worst sins, but for our best duties.

4. Have an eye to Jesus Christ, "Look up to him, the Author and Finisher of our faith." Heb. xii. 2. The word *looking unto* (*Aphorontes*) signifies, in the original, such a looking unto, as that we look off those things which may divert our looking up to Jesus. Labour, my beloved, to look still unto Christ as the Author of grace, when you have the greatest exercise, or increase, or comfort of your grace. Say, when thou hast the greatest strength of grace, as Jehoshaphat did when he had that great strength of men, 500,000, "Lord, we know not what to do, only our eyes are upon thee." 2 Chron. xx. 12. There are these three things which we should eye in Christ's giving us grace: —

1. How voluntarily and freely Jesus Christ doth issue out his grace to his people. Never did a mother more willingly give her child suck, when her breasts did ach and were ready to break, than Jesus Christ doth bestow grace upon hispeople.

Christ doth not, like a merchant, sell his grace; but, like a king, freely bestow all. See the tenor of the covenant of grace how free it was: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk, without money and without price." Isa. lv. 1. "Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Rev. xxii. 17. Nothing is so free as grace, — it is offered and is bestowed upon the freest terms imaginable! All that Christ requires is but our receiving it. It is "the delight of Christ to shew mercy" (Prov. viii. 31) and bestow grace upon his people! It is the meat of Christ to do the will of God that sent him, and to finish his work. Never was man more willing to eat his meat when he is hungry, than Jesus Christ was to do good (John iv. 34) and bestow grace upon them that wanted it. So also it is said of Christ, in Psalm lxxii. (which is clearly a prophecy of Jesus Christ) "That he should come down like rain upon the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth." Psa. lxxii. 6. Now there is nothing comes down more sweetly and freely than the rain on a dry and thirsty ground.

II. Secondly, Look unto Jesus, the Author of grace, how irresistibly he doth communicate his grace! "I will work, and who can let it?" Isa. xliii. 13. It is true, not only of God's external deliverances, but is as true of God's working grace in the hearts of his people. *Who shall let?*

1. Satan shall not; for though he be a strong man, and armed, and hath got possession, yet when Christ comes, he is stronger than Satan.

2. Sin shall not be able to hinder God's work of grace. Grace shall be too hard for the strongest opposition that is made against it! It is true, a man may and doth resist the grace of God with a gainsaying and contradicting resistance; but not with an overcoming resistance.

III. Thirdly, Lookup to Jesus, the Bestower of grace; how proportionably he gives grace suitable, and answerable to thy temptations and need! "God divides to every one his grace and gifts severally as he will" (1 Cor. xii. 11); and yet he gives grace that shall be enough. "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Cor. xii. 9) said God to Paul, — sufficient to quell corruptions, sufficient to repel temptation, sufficient to make thee wait upon me till I give thee deliverance.

5. Be exhorted to have recourse to Jesus Christ for supply of grace. Go to Jesus; and, by the prayer of faith, approach to the throne of grace, and beg Grace to help thee in time of need. Go unto God by Christ, — and God, through Christ, will supply all your wants. "My God, saith Paul to the Philippians, shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ." Phil. iv. 19. *en to Christo.* Go to this God, and express yourselves before his throne with sensible complaints and earnest requests; say, Lord, seeing there is so much water in the fountain, why should my cistern be empty? — such fulness of grace in Christ, and so little grace in my heart! Lord, hast thou not "gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also" (Psalm lviii. 18); and that is the worst that can be said of me, and hast thou not a blessing for me also?

3. Use of caution, though we say that all grace is in and from Christ.

1. This should not cut off our endeavours after grace; — we should as earnestly labour to get grace, as if there were no way to have it but by our endeavours; — we should so strive to get to Heaven, as if it were to be gotten by our fingers, by our own pains. God's promises and purposes of giving grace should rather quicken and enlarge than any way slacken our endeavours after grace. See how the apostle makes God's working grace in us a ground why we should work: "Work out

your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure" (Phil. ii. 12, 13); and again, *I know the thoughts that I think towards you*, saith the Lord; *thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end*; but see also how God joins their *duty* with his *promise*, the *means* unto the *end*: — "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go, and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you." Jer. xxix. 11, 12. So also, in the prophecy of Ezekiel, the Lord hath promised to do great things for them; and then adds, "Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." Ezek. xxxvi. 27. God's promise to David to build him an house, did not at all slacken his prayer to God for that purpose; for thus we find David praying, "Thou, oh! my God, hast told thy servant that thou wilt build him a house; therefore, thy servant hath found in his heart to pray before thee; and now, Lord (thou art God, and hast promised this goodness to thy servant) now, therefore, let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may be before thee for ever; for thou blessest, O Lord, and it shall be blessed for ever!" 2 Sam. vii. 25, 26, 27. Thus also did Paul: "By the grace of God, I am what I am; and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. 1 Cor. xv. 10. See how he joins God's grace and his own endeavours together! Thou must then so endeavour after grace, as if it were to be gotten by *labour*, and not bestowed by *favour*; yet when thou hast done all thou canst, thou must acknowledge grace to be free, as if thou hadst not laboured at all.

2. Though there be abundance of grace in Christ, yet let all such as have no interest in Christ, take heed how they flatter themselves into

a conceit, that they shall receive grace from Christ. Interest in the person gives communication of his grace. As it was in Christ's person, he could not have had those excellencies and attributes which were in God, had not his two natures, human and divine, been personally united in him; and, therefore, it is said, by virtue of the hypostatical union, that in him, *i. e.* "in his person, dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. ii. 9); so, unless there be that mystical union between Christ and us, we could not be partakers, *nor grow strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Union is the ground of communion*; and, therefore, we read first of receiving Christ; and then afterwards of "receiving of his fulness, grace for grace." John i. 12, 16, compared. — Though thou art near Christ by profession,, yet, if thou art not one with Christ by faith, thou canst not receive any virtue from him. If a man tie food to any part of his body, it will not nourish him; because it is not received, concocted, or incorporated, — that only nourishes which becomes one and the same substance with us, so we receive strength and increase of grace from Christ as we are united unto him by faith. Take a graft, and tie it to a tree, and it brings forth no fruit; but let it be united unto a tree by implantation, then the graft grows fruitful; — so "without Christ, or (as it is in the original) separate from Christ, you can do nothing." John xv. 5, *koris emou*. He that, by faith, is not planted together in the likeness of Christ's death (Rom. vi. 5) shall never receive spiritual nourishment from him: he that doth not abide in Christ, is cast forth "as a branch" (John xv. 6); he was never a true branch, only seemed to be one. Christ is a Fountain of Grace; but it is faith that draws out of this fountain. Christ is a Treasury of Grace; but it is faith that unlocks this treasury. By our communion with Christ we receive grace for grace.

We are made by love, meekness, and patience like unto Christ; but by faith we are made one with Christ; and that union is the cause of communion; and, therefore, Christless persons are graceless persons.

3. If men want grace, let them know, that not Christ, but themselves are to be blamed. There is fulness in Christ, — there is grace enough in Christ; in him there is fulness of sufficiency, of efficiency, and of redundancy; but if a vessel be stopped, cast it into the sea, and it will receive no water; the fault is in the vessel which is stopped, there is no want of water in the sea. They that have the river-water or conduit-water come into their houses, if no water come, you must not conclude there is no water in the river or fountain, but that the pipes are either stopped or broken; so it is, if ever you are straitened, you are straitened in your own bowels, and not straitened in your God. If a house be dark, it is not for any want of light in the sun, but for want of windows in the house; so if thou wantest grace, it is not for want of grace in Christ, but for want of faith in thy soul, to draw and derive more grace from Christ.

4. Envy not the grace of God in others. Tho' Christ should bestow more grace on others than on thee, "yet thy eye must not be evil, because his is good." Mat. xx. 15. Thou shouldest not have an envious eye because Christ hath a bountiful hand. It is not only a fault in wicked men to envy the grace that is in good men, as Cain envied Abel, *because his sacrifice was accepted, and his own rejected*; but also even good men are too apt to envy one another. Joseph's brethren envied their brother, because he was beloved of his father; and Peter, it is thought, envied John, the beloved disciple. John xxi. 20, 21. But take heed of envy, — it is dishonourable to God, and often hinders us from receiving mercy and grace

from God. To envy Christ's dispensing of his grace to whom and in what measure he pleases, is unbecoming a Christian: to rejoice in others happiness, is to do as the angels of Heaven, — to envy others good, is like the Devils in Hell. Would a father take it well that his children fall out about their portions, which their father has given them? God is absolutely free to give one, or two, or five talents, as he pleases; and if another have more grace than thou, yet be thankful for that grace thou hast, and envy no man.

Lastly, Lessen not that grace thou hast received. As there is no sin small, because it is an offence against a great God, so there is no grace little, because it comes from the great God. Unthankfulness hinders this oil from running. As a man must not be contented with the greatest measure of grace, so must he not be unthankful for the least measure of grace. Consider, it is Jesus Christ that hath begun the work of grace: that there is *some little good wrought in thee,* is the work of Christ; and he that hath begun a good work will also finish it: he that hath given grace a "being in thy soul, will also strengthen thee with strength in thy soul, and perfect what concerneth thee." Psalm cxxxviii. 3, 8. Do not thou thyself quench the flax that begins to smoke, nor break the reed that is bruised; but be thankful to Christ that hath kindled this smoking flax, and wait upon him, who will so accomplish his work, that he will send out judgment unto victory. Mat. xii. 20.

SERMON XVI.

PRECOGNITION OF DEATH.

Preached at St. Lawrence Jewry, London, April 29, 1651, at the Funeral of Mrs. B——, being the LAST Sermon that ever Mr. Love preached.

JOB xxx. 23.

For I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.

IN the handling of these words, it is needful I should dispatch these two things:

1. Give you the scope; and,
2. The sense of the words.

For the first, the scope of the words, because they are ushered in with an illative or causal particle (*for*), which carries a reference to somewhat that goeth before; and, that you may distinctly take notice of the reference, you must look back to the 18th verse of this chapter. There Job tells you of a strong disease under which he laboured: *By the great force of my disease is my garment changed; it bindeth me about as the collar of my coat.* It seems the disease was so strong upon him that it even strangled his breath; it was as a collar about his neck. Upon the sense of this his disease, he breaks out into his holy meditations: *For I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.* Now take a hint from the scope and context, that *sicknesses and diseases they should be remembrancers of us about our dying.* Sick men should always think with themselves they are dying men; and they that die daily need not fear dying suddenly. So

I come to the sense of the words *I know.* It is not to be understood of a notional or speculative knowledge, that doth signify a bare and naked knowledge of a general truth, but such kind of knowledge as is practical and experimental; and so also doth Junius translate it:—"It signifies not only that the thing was known to him, but as if he was convinced of it by a peculiar experience." This experimental knowledge wrought in Job holy preparations for death. *I know,* and by experience can tell, I have such a kind of knowledge, that hath practicalness and experience in it, *That thou wilt bring me to death.*—This shewed the holiness of Job in opposition to the doctrine of the Heathens, who guessed that all such events fell out by fate and fortune, and not by the determinate decree and counsel of the Most High:—*And to the house appointed for all living.* Though he doth not speak here where this house is, yet he doth in Job xvii. 13, *If I wait, the grave is mine house; and I have made my bed in the darkness.* Now, that which was his house, must be the house of all living; that is, the grave. Now the grave is compared to an house, 1st, Alluding to the Egyptian sepulchres, which were made like a house, with several arched rooms; — 2d, Because there we dwell in silence. Thus ye have the words briefly paraphrased unto you. I shall give you some practical deduction from them. *For I know that thou wilt bring me to death.* These words are the gracious speech of Job, touching his own mortality; and in them we have three particulars.

1. The rationality of this speech. He brings it in with an illative, — *For.*

2. The particularity of it. He draws a particular meditation of death, &c.—*Me.*

3. The piety of it. He acknowledges God's hand in bringing him to death. *Thou,* and not chance or fortune.

For the first, The rationality of it. Holy Job doth not speak of his death without some cause, but for the ground and reason foregoing. *By the great force of my disease is my garment changed; it binds me about as the collar of my coat:* and then he breaks out into this holy meditation, *For I know thou wilt bring me to death.*

From thence observe,

1. *That it is a very rational thing in weakness, to have holy meditations about death.* Job lay under a disease that even was ready to choke and strangle him, and then he breaks out into this holy meditation, *For I know thou wilt bring me to death,* &c. It is observable, the antients take notice that David made three Psalms when he lay upon his sick-bed (Psalm vi. xxx. and xxxix); and in all those Psalms there are divine raptures and holy meditations about death. Job xvii. 1, *My breath is corrupt, my days are extinct, the grave is ready for me.* He doth not mean an ill savour in his breath, but it was an obstruction and stopping in his breath; that is, he was *short breathed, and straitened under a violent disease.* It is conceived that Job had that disease which is called the *Phthisis*; and the consideration of this disease made him think that the grave was ready for him. So Heman lay under a violent disease (Psalm lxxxviii. 3, 4, 5) *For my soul is full of trouble, and my life draws nigh to the grave. I am accounted with them that go down into the pit; I am as a man that hath no strength, free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou remembrest no more, and they are cut off from thy hands.* When sickness is in the chamber, then Death is at the window. Diseases are but the messengers, harbingers, and forerunners of death: in the prophet's phrase, "Death is come up into our windows." Jer. ix. 21. When diseases are in the house, then death is at the threshold. So Job reckoneth: "When I lie

down, I say, When shall I rise, and the night be gone?—and I am full of tossings to and fro, unto the dawning of the day;" — and then he saith, "My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust: my skin is broken and become loathsome." Job vii. 4, 5.

First use is to condemn those that, when they lie on a sick-bed, they hope for life, but never think of death; their own guiltiness and their own wickedness of living doth so fill them with fear and horror, that the thoughts of death are irksome and tedious to them. Just like Lewis the Eleventh, King of France, when he lay sick of a dangerous disease, he charged his servants and attendants that they should not speak of death in his hearing. Many mens' bodies are magazines and hospitals of diseases, who, when they are living, never think of death, though there is but little betwixt them and the grave.

Second use is to those that are healthful and strong. It is true, diseases are the immediate harbingers and forerunners of death in an ordinary way; yet you may soon die, though a disease seize not on you. As the fruit of a tree do more perish by extraordinary winds and tempests than do stay upon the tree and are gathered by the husbandman, — so violent diseases may soon kill you, tho' marrow be in your bones and strength in your joints. Paracelsus, a skilful physician, he gloried, That if any man would follow his physical prescriptions, he should not die any violent death, but merely through age; and yet that boasting man, before he was forty years of age, he himself died of a fever. Thus I have done with the first consideration, the reasonableness of this:—I am under a sore disease, and therefore I do think of death.

Secondly, The particularity of Job's speech is to be observed. Job doth not stand upon that general conclusion,—*There is no man that liveth but he shall see death.* Psalm lxxxviii. 48. He

doth not speak in general so, but *I know I must die.* From thence observe this point,

2. *That general conclusions about death should be enforced upon the soul by particular applications.* Beloved, we should not only have general notions and empty speculations about death, but practical and particular conclusions concerning our death, such as may lay an awe upon the conscience. Thus, in the case of the godly, said Eliphaz, "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in his season;" and then he adds (verse 27) "Lo this, we have searched it; hear it, and know thou it for thy good." Job v. 26, 27. General conclusions that all must die, must be enforced upon the soul with particular applications, to turn you from the world, to beget in you serious thoughts touching your future and eternal welfare.—General truths do not carry that force upon the conscience, unless they are drawn by applicative inference; and, therefore, Psalm lxxiii. *ult.* The Psalmist saith, not only *It is good to draw near unto God*, but, *It is good for me.*

The third particular is, The piety of Job's speech, in these words, *Thou wilt bring me to death.* Now there are three particulars in it which note Job's faith and piety.

1. He doth not ascribe dying to fate and fortune, but to the providence of the Most High. From thence observe,

2. *That it is the property of the godly to see God's hand in taking away men by death.* It was but the dotage of the Heathen that knew not God, to ascribe events to blind fortune; and it was the corruption of the Chaldeans to overlook the Deity in all fatal events; yet Job desired to see and submit to death, and to God's hand in bringing it upon him:—*Thou wilt bring me to death.* Another thing observable is this: *I know thou wilt bring me to death.* It is not a notional and bare knowledge of the understanding, but

such a kind of knowledge that is considerate and practical, which works upon the affections. From thence observe,

3. *That though all men do know notionally they must die, yet only godly men know it practically and considerately.* To know practically of your dying, consider before-hand, How shall I do to launch into the eternal gulph? What shall become of me in another world when I leave this? Is my peace made with God? Is my person justified? Am I in a state of grace? Now Job's speech hath latitude in it: *I know thou wilt bring me to death*; that is, I do so know it, that I will provide for it, and I will prepare for it, and I will lay a foundation for eternal life. Solomon, speaking of funeral solemnity, saith, "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart." Eccl. vii. 2. I, and all men that do not lay death to heart, they may perhaps talk of death at a funeral; but the living they shall lay it to heart, *lay it upon the heart*, as the Hebrew, they shall lay it to heart, and lay it upon their hearts: — so Tremelius. A wicked man lays it upon his tongue, but a godly man lays his truth upon his heart. There is none but a godly man that so knows any thing of dying, as to know it so practically, affectionately, and considerately, and so as to do these three things: —

1. None but a godly man considers of his dying, that he dies deservedly. He tastes the bitterness, and feels the burthen of sin in his diseases and sense of approaching death; — he considers with himself, that it is not a disease that will bring him to his grave, but the sins of his life that kill him.

2. None knows that he must die so as a godly man, whose care it is to die preparedly. A godly man knows he must die, and this knowledge makes him prepare for a dying time, — to live

every day as his last day. The prophet spoke of death, in the former part of Psalm xc. that *the days of man are threescore years and ten.* See what follows: *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.* He doth mean, by numbering our days, to live so exactly, as to count the number of our days to be so few, every day as if this were the last day, and this time as the time of the coming of Christ to judgment.

3. None but a godly man knows of his dying, so as to consider that there is a necessity that sin must die in him before his body dies. Seneca, an Heathen, could say, *Let thy vices die before thee.* There must not be only a suspension, but a mortification of sin. A godly man considers, Though I live blamelessly, that men cannot say black is mine eye to any outward practice, yet I must have my inward lusts and corruptions die before my body die;—and, therefore, they ought to be conversant in things tending to mortification. This is to know death considerately and affectionately, whereas wicked men consider of death notionally; their senses tell them that all must die. They say, All men, young and old, rich and poor, must die; but this is but matter of discourse in them: but the godly know it with savoury knowledge.

Thirdly, Job's piety was, in that he doth represent death to himself, not in a formidable and dreadful way, but under a comfortable representation: — *For I know thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house,* &c. He doth represent the grave under the notion of a house, as he represents it elsewhere. From thence observe this point:

5. *That a child of God that hath not allowed guilt upon his conscience, he may and ought to represent death to himself in such familiar representations, as may make it less dreadful and more*

desirable. Sometimes it is represented as going to bed: — "They shall rest in their beds." Isaiah lvii. 2. A godly man when he lieth upon his death-bed, and, by sickness, is weary of his life, tossing to and fro till the dawning of day, let him think the grave will be but a bed of rest unto him: so death is often styled asleep:—"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Dan xii. 2. Death is embalmed with sweet and comfortable language.

6. *The grave is the house for all the living to be lodged in.* "If I wait, the grave is mine house, I have made my bed in the darkness." Job xvii. 13. The grave is the house that I must go to, as after a hard day's labour in my house, I go to bed in the dark night; so we go to our grave as into our bed for a long night; going to bed is but for a short night, but going to the grave is for a long night; death is sometimes represented with dreadful considerations, but with amiableness too. There is an abhorrency in nature against death, it is embalmed by Jesus Christ; he lay in the grave three days, to embalm the grave to you; though your beds be cloudy and dark, yet ye rest in them till the resurrection-day.

For the opening of the doctrine, I shall dispatch these two queries:—

1. I shall shew you why the grave is compared to an house.

2. I shall shew you what kind of house the grave is.

For the first query, why the grave is compared to an house?

1. This reason some authors give, Because in ancient times (as hath been hinted) among the Egyptians, their graves and sepulchres were built after the fashion of houses, with arches, and such kind of superstructures; therefore they say it is called *an house.*

2, Other authors give this reason: — Because that as a man after a day's labour abroad, he comes to his house for rest; so a man after a life's labour in the world, he comes to his grave, as to his house for rest.

The second query is this, What kind of house is the grave? Now I will give you these four properties of this house: — 1. It is a desolate and a lonesome house. 2. It is a dark house. 3. It is an old house. 4. It is a silent house. For the first, the grave is,—

1. A desolate and a lonesome house; "I shall be (said Job) with kings and counsellors of the earth, which build desolate places for themselves" (Job iii. 14); that is, they build tombs and monuments where they shall lie, and then they shall leave all their attendance, "When I shall bring thee down with them that descend into the pit, with the people of old time, and shall set thee in the low parts of the earth, in places desolate of old, with them that go down into the pit, that thou be not inhabited." Ezek. xxvi. 20. — Job xvii. 14, *I have said to corruption, thou art my father; and to the worms, thou art my mother and my sister*; there is all the company you will have, corruption and the worms; friends bring you to your grave, and there they leave you.

2. Your grave is a dark house, Job xvii. 13, *I have made my bed in the darkness*; that is, in the grave. The grave is like the sleeping-room in a house, not like the dining-room and working-room. The dining-room is to be light, and so the working-room, but the sleeping-room is dark. 'Tis but the stopping of the mouth of the grave, and it is but the drawing of the curtains of the bed, where thou shalt lie in darkness till the resurrection-day. In the grave there is neither the light of the body, which is the eye, nor the light of the air, which is the sun: the sun it shall not shine there, nor the body see there; — therefore (Eccl. xi. 9) *Re-*

joice, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee unto judgment: — and ver. 8, *He had said remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many.* The meaning is this:—The continuance in the grave, which is the house of darkness, shall be long, even to the end of the world.

3. The grave is an old house, as old as Adam; he digged his grave with his own fingers: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Rom. v. 12. The grave is a lasting house; a house where thou must stay a great while (Eccl. xii. 5): *Also, when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fear shall be in the way, and the almond-tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail, because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets.* It is a long home, a kind of a house of eternity, a long while till Christ's coming to judgment, our long home, in opposition to our present houses, that is, our short home. Your houses are your short homes, but the graves are your long homes.

4. The grave is a silent house; Psalm xxxi. 17, *Let me not be ashamed, O Lord, for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave.* The psalmist prays here for deliverance from his persecutors; here is nothing but clamour, persecution, and opposition; and one shall not have a good word from them; —but, as Job comforts himself in the grave, "There the voice of the oppressor shall not be heard" (Job iii. 18); so may we, we shall be at rest and silence there; there the weary shall be at rest, and there the prisoners shall rest together. — For the uses of this point:—

The first use is an use of comfort to the godly; they may be comforted upon this doctrine. This doctrine is a doctrine that is dreadful to wicked men; their graves are dungeons to them; but to God's children the grave is a house. Now you may be comforted upon these four considerations:

1. That though the grave be an house, yet be comforted; it is a resting-house (Job iii. 17); *There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest.* He speaks here of the grave in ver. 13; *For now should I have lain still and been quiet; I should have slept; then had I been at rest.* There is no work to be done in this house:—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest." Eccl. ix. 10.—"They shall rest in their beds." Isaiah lvii. 2.

2. That though the grave be a house, yet be comforted; it is but a sleeping-house; it is not a house where thou shalt be everlastingly. Beloved, though it be a house, yet it is but a sleeping-house; it shall not always keep your bodies; that is the meaning of Paul's exultation: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" 1 Cor. xv. 55. He refers it to the resurrection; the grave, though it compass us, yet it shall not conquer us.

3. Though the grave be a house, yet be comforted, it is but a hiding-house; such a house as is a hiding-place for God's people:—Job xiv. 13, *O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that thou wouldst keep me in secret until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldst appoint me a set time and remember me!* Times may be so calamitous, that there may be more safety under ground than above ground; they that have lain a long time in their graves, may be more happy than those that are living:—"Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy door about thee; hide thy-

self, as it were, for a little moment until the indignation be overpast." Isaiah xxvi. 20. Though some refer this to a temporal deliverance, yet others refer it to the grave, where God lodges his children when he takes them from the evil to come. Isaiah lvii. 1.

4. Though the grave be a house, yet be comforted, it is a perfumed house; a house embalmed and perfumed by Christ's lying in the grave. All the acts that Christ did, they were for our sakes. Christ died to save us by dying; Christ lay buried in the grave to make the grave a bed of rest; he rose again from the dead, to sanctify our resurrection; and by his presence there, he hath perfumed this bed, — this house the grave.

Second use for instruction. 1. Here is matter for meditation. When you are in your own houses, bethink yourselves thus :—Now I am here walking in my house from chamber to chamber; but ere long my chamber shall be in the dust. Now I am coming to my bed in dark night; but ere long God will put out the candle of my life, and will lay me in the grave, as in a bed of darkness. Now I am in my own house; but ere long my house will cast me out to my grave; and that is the house that will take me in.

2. Let it check in you all covetous and inordinate desires after worldly things :—thou shalt come from lying in the dark house in the womb, to lie in the dark house of the grave. O, what a vast company of inordinate and luxurious desires are there in the hearts of men! In the womb one foot, in the cradle three feet will content you, and in the grave six feet; but when thou livest in the world, a whole world will not content you, there are such inordinate and luxurious desires in mens' hearts, when they have all affluence and confluence of creature-comforts; — now they must have their variety of houses, a country-house, a summer-house, a winter-house; yet, thou must exchange

thy many houses for one house. It is worthy your notice that passage you read of in Scripture (1 Sam. x. 24): Samuel when he had anointed Saul king, and the people had chosen him, what signal doth he give him to confirm him anointed? — it was to go to Rachel's sepulchre. Now the reason is this, that he might not be glutted with the preferments and honours he was entering upon. The emperors of Constantinople, in their inaugurations on their coronation-days, had a mason came, who shewed them several marble stones, and asked them to choose which of those should be made ready for their grave-stones: — and so we read of Joseph of Arimathea, that he had his tomb in his garden, to check the pleasures of the place. Now in thy house thou hast superfluity and abundance. I can go now to variety of houses; but one day thou shalt leave all thy houses to go to one house, and there leave all your company and your friends.

But how can this be true, when the Scripture saith, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." John viii. 51.

To this I answer, that this Scripture intends not a natural and corporal death, but a spiritual and eternal death; and it is said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believes in me, though he were dead, yet he shall live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die" (John xi. 25, 26); that is, though he die naturally, yet he shall live eternally.

But you will say Enoch *was not buried*; *and* Elijah *was carried up in a chariot.*

Particular examples do not frustrate general rules; though they were not laid in their graves, yet they underwent something equivalent to death. There was a particular reason why God translated Enoch and Elijah, because they were to be types of Chrit's resurrection, and pledges of ours.

But some will say, as in 1 Cor. xv. 51, *We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed; therefore, at the last day they shall not be buried, and the grave not the house of all men; but those that are then living shall be suddenly carried up to Heaven.*

To this I answer, That at the last day, though men shall not come to the grave, yet they shall be taken up when the trumpet shall sound, and shall go through the fire, and they shall in their translation undergo something that shall be equivalent to a death, and to a burial.

2. Lastly, we are tied to this decree of death, though God be not tied. Rom. v. 14, and Rom. ix. 27. By those places we are to understand, all men do deserve to die, though God may exempt some, as those that live to see the end of the world, from a death as ours is. Death is the end of all men; and the grave is the house appointed for all living. "Death hath passed upon all men, because all have sinned" (Rom. v. 12); all deserve to die: and even those that are changed at the last day, undergo something equivalent to death itself.

APPENDIX.

LETTERS

TO AND FROM MR. LOVE, IN PRISON.

Published in the Gospel Magazine for January and March 1775.

LETTER I.

DR. DRAKE TO MR. LOVE.

July 12th, 1651.

My most dear and precious friend in the Lord, in whom I observed great reason both of love and honour, from the first day that God blessed me with the knowledge of you; but never more than at this time, when you are ascending your triumphant chariot, and mounting into the cloud of witnesses (Heb. xii. 1) to guide and encourage us who are left behind, to run with readiness the race that is set before us.

Sweet Sir, I wonder not you are so cheerful, being so near your journey's end, — steered by our great Pilot out of a dangerous and troublesome sea, and entering into the harbour, — putting off your pilgrim's weeds, that you may be clothed with the white robes as a free denizen of the heavenly Jerusalem, I mistook, in dreaming of an earthly Pentecost and Jubilee. That 50th day, I now perceive, was a hint and summons, to call you to the everlasting Jubilee above (Heb. xii. 22, 24) — a symbol to the eternal Sabbath! Heb. iv. 9, 10. How much are we beholden to our very enemies (rather to God for them) who never do us more good than when they do us the shrewdest turn! I wonder not now at that exultation of the apostle, Rom. viii. 28, 33, to the end, and 1 Cor. iii. 21, 23. Death

is so far from separating, that it brings immediately to Christ (Phil. i. 23); and that by a stroke so honourable, so easy, so comfortable, so speedy, that you need but wink and go to Heaven! The Lord is pleased to give you a writ of ease, and to pay you your penny at the sixth hour. Blessed be God, we serve a good Master, who puts us only upon honest and honourable employments, makes our task easy and short, doth all our works for us and in us, and after all rewards us freely and richly as if we had earned our wages: — better be God's hireling than the world's darling. Luke xv. 17, 19.

Dear Sir, I bless God for your faithfulness, patience, courage, and wisdom, whereby you have tried and discovered the policy and strength of your antagonists; and shewed, to your poor unworthy fellow-sufferers, that by grace they are conquerable. The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour; go in this thy might, and smite the host of Midian as one man. Judg. vi. 12, 14, 16. The Lord make you a true Sampson, that you may do the Devil's kingdom more mischief at your death, than ever you did in all your life. God is now but in his old method, to make the martyrs the seed of his church. Col. i. 24. — Hiel deserved a curse for building Jericho (Josh. vi. 26); but God deserves blessing for building the New Jerusalem, though he lay the foundation thereof in Abiram his first-born (so is Christ our High Father, compare Gen. xvii. 5, with Isaiah ix. 6) and set up the gates thereof in his younger son Segub, 1 Kings xvi. and last. Such are we, poor contemptible creatures, exalted and strengthened by God not only to do, but also to suffer for his name, cause, church, and covenant, Acts v. 41, and Phil. i. 29. The Lord is making you such a blessed Segub, making that to be your honour, strength, and safety, which many judged to be your shame, weakness, and danger.

Dear Sir, God honours you to be the Elias, and first to ascend the fiery chariot. May I, without

presumption, be the Elisha, and make two or three bold requests unto you! — and, first, Let me beg your prayers for a double portion of your spirit; — Secondly, Let me see you, if possible, before you ascend, though it be but through the lattice, on your nuptial morning; — Thirdly, Let fall your mantle, that I may by means of it be enabled to divide Jordan, yea, the Red Sea, if God call me to it, and not sink like the Egyptians in the mighty waters. Psalm xxxii. 6; — Fourthly, If there be any remembrance of things below in Heaven (Luke xvi. 24, 25, 28) will you, when you are in the blessed haven, think of your poor friend, and the rest of your fellow-soldiers left behind, and labouring in the storm, till Christ shall come to them as he doth to you? Surely, the church triumphant doth not forget the church militant; and prayer is no paradox in Heaven, till the body of Christ be perfected. Rev. vi. 9, 10. — If Justice makes them pray against enemies, why should not Charity draw out supplications for their friends? Surely, there is a communion of saints between the church militant and triumphant; we may bless God for them, and cannot they pray for us? The martyrs would not pray to dead saints; but some desired living saints to pray for them, both on Earth and in Heaven; and I think therein they were not superstitious.

Sweet Sir, I know to whom I speak, and am assured, that love will not be puffed up with that which would soon burst a bladder of pride. None higher in God's eye than those that are lowest in their own. I see your time is short, and, therefore, though my affection be like Jordan in the time of harvest, I must set bounds and banks to my words, lest I divert and trouble you in your passage.

I doubt not but you remember that you must pass through Jordan to the fiery chariot. Jordan was not more effectual to cleanse Naaman's leprosy, than the river of repentant tears is to purge the leprosy of sin (Psalm cxix. 136) next after the im-

mense ocean of the blood of Christ. It is not Abana and Pharpar will wash away the leprosy, — but Jordan; nor will every tear wash away sin, — but penitent tears. You have but little time to mourn. Christ stands by with his towel and handkerchief. Psalm lvi. 8; Rev. vii. last; xxi. 4; Isa. xxv. 8. — Spiritual sorrow and joy are inseparable companions in this life, and the dove-like spirit of Comfort loves these streams. Cant. iii. 12, Mat. iii. 16. — Every true Christian hath this baptism of the river joined with the baptism of fire; and now God honours you with the baptism of blood superadded. The cup of tears and cup of comfort may well go together; and happy he who can mingle his drink with weeping. Psalm cii. 9. Such need not fear to pledge Christ in his cup of blood, and undoubtedly shall sit at Christ's right hand in his kingdom (Mat. xx. 22, 23) though not in the sense of the two ambitious brethren. If we could weep or repent for any thing in Heaven, sure it would be because we wept and repented no more, nor no better on Earth. The Lord enable you and us all to do much work in a little time! If I see you no more, I must be forced here to take my long leave; yet why say I so? — it may prove but a short leave, since, in likelihood (as things stand) few weeks, yea, days may bring me to a sight of your blessed soul in the arms of Christ: and, surely, the communion of saints in Heaven is connected with their essential happiness. The Lord enable me to imitate your graces, and then I shall not doubt to inherit your happiness, which is only God, the highest end, and chiefest good! The Lord be nearer to you than your danger, and support you in the most needful hour, — and when men have done their worst, receive your soul to his mercy! Acts vii. 55, 56, 59; Luke ii. 29, 30; 2 Tim. iv. 4, 7, 8. — So prays

Your poor unworthy friend and companion
in the kingdom and tribulation of Jesus Christ.

LETTER II.

MR. ROBINSON TO MR. LOVE.

Dear Friend, *August 19th*, 1651.

The loss which the church of God will sustain by your death, is a very great trouble to me; and, I doubt not, but a far greater to others, whose hearts God hath made more sensible to feel his hand. This stroke, I am confident, will be your happiness; but a great misery, a sad punishment to many: — when God hath a mind to punish many at once, he useth to take this course. The extinguishing such a star (I do not flatter you, God knows) cannot but greatly afflict the whole world!—I wish heartily God would grant me the favour to see you before your wedding-day, for I dare not call it *A Dying-Day*.

I hope I shall be in your thoughts when you are at the throne of grace. Good Sir, heap up as many prayers as you can for the poor church of God, before you leave us, — it shall be the best legacy you can bequeath; what you shall sow, some will live to reap, and you will not be unrewarded. Jesus Christ had his thoughts on the church, even to his dying hour! Good Sir, imitate your Master. I need not say any thing to strengthen you against the fear of your approaching day: I doubt not but you have often overcome that fear, through Jesus Christ. *Profectio est quam putas mortem* (or, in English, What you think death is a journey): it is but the taking of a short journey; and though the way be deep, yet it is but short. God brings you the nearest way: a shorter cut never had any to rest. I know you have often been upon *mount Nebo*, where you have seen Canaan, whither you are going. The mystical head cannot be cut off. You have finished your testimony, and fear not to receive your recompence! Christ has transformed this black messenger to you into an angel of light! How soon

others may follow you, is known only to God; — if we stay longer, it is but to row in a strong sea. Moses was very willing to die. God said, "Go up and die;" and he went up and died. Let not the care of your relations afflict you, "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; leave your fatherless children, — God will provide for them; let your widow trust in God." Your dear yoke-fellow is a partaker of the same grace with you, — How rich are they that are heirs of the promises! You can commend your spirit into God's hands, much more your wife and children. Remember that promise, "I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed." Sir, it is a richer portion than the mines of India; you were but a cistern to them, — the fountain lives, and will live when you are dead. God can provide without you, you cannot without God! Good Sir, cheer up, — I hear how full of joy you are! Blessed be God, all these are but little drops to the ocean! I have wrote this to fill you more and more. An axe and a fever are all one, — you shall die without sickness. When you think of the present ignominy, look on the future glory: you shall be with God, Christ, angels, the souls of just men made perfect, in a short time! What a happiness is it to have grace in perfection! — to see God face to face, to be freed from the being of sin, temptations of devils, society of wicked men! — "You have fought a good fight, you have finished your course, you have kept the faith," &c. — and now you are going to receive your crown, — a crown of glory that fadeth not away. You are now going to that place where the voice of the oppressor shall never be heard: you are going to your bed, the best and softest you ever slept on! The steps of the scaffold shall be a Jacob's ladder, upon which you shall ascend to your loving Father! The scaffold will be as mount Nebo, — the axe of the executioner will cut off the head of Sin, and put an end to all misery! Be sure, Sir, not only the angels of

God, but the God of the angels himself, will mightily strengthen you. If your death, and this kind of death, were not most for the glory of God and the benefit of the church, I am confident God would have saved you from this hour.

I have writ thus, not because you want advice, but to testify my love, my dear love, to you, and to give you remembrance of me and mine before your departure hence. Good Sir, accept it as my last farewell. Farewell, farewell, dear friend! God, that hath bound up your soul in the bundle of life, be your comfort, joy, hope, peace, and confidence in life and death to all eternity! Yea, he will be your Guide unto death; he will be a Husband and Head to your dearest wife; he will be a tender Father to your little babes. This is the confidence, this shall be the prayer of, Sir, your dearest friend.

LETTER III.

MR. JENKYN TO MR. LOVE :—A BRIEF NOTE.

My dear, dear Heart,

Thou art very near to my soul. The Lord Jesus Christ smile with the pleasantest face upon thee that ever he did upon a sufferer! I here send thee a book, that I have been much relieved by in my imprisonment. What are ten thousand deaths, where Christ is apprehended by faith! These considerations, where the leaf is turned down (Psalm xxxiii. 5) do sweetly support faith. I am afraid almost to send these thoughts, for fear over-many notions may disturb thee. I judge these more profitable than speculative discourses of death. The great God, that hangs the earth upon nothing but his word, bear up thy soul on his promises! O sweet, most sure, sure, sure! O remember *sure* promises! — as stable as the very essence of God; for

the performances whereof God hath pawned his being! "As I live," &c.—My Heart, I love thee, I kiss thee, I weep upon thee, I shall see thee in glory!

The Lord Jesus strengthen thee!—He will.

LETTER IV.

MRS. LOVE TO HER HUSBAND.

[Published in the Christian Magazine for November, 1790.]

Sweetheart,

I beseech you to observe, that it is your wife that writes to you. I hope thou hast freely given up thy wife and children to the Lord God, who said, "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me." O that the Lord would keep thee from having one troubled thought about thy relations! I desire to give thyself freely into the Father's hands; and not only look upon it as a crown of glory for thee to die for Christ, but as an honour to me, that I should have such a husband to leave for Christ!

I dare not speak to thee, nor have I a thought within myself of my unspeakable loss; but wholly keep my eye fixed upon thy unspeakable and unconceivable gain. Thou leavest but a sinful mortal wife, to be everlastingly married to the King of Glory; thou leavest but children, brethren, and sisters to go to the Lord Jesus, thy eldest Brother; thou leavest friends, to go to the enjoyment of holy angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect; thou dost but leave Earth for Heaven; and, if natural thoughts begin to rise, I hope that spirit of grace that is within thee will quell them, knowing that all things below are but dung and dross in comparison of those above! I know thou keepest thine eye fixed upon the loss of earth, my dear,—

I know that God hath not only prepared glory for thee, and thee for it, — but I am persuaded he will sweeten the way for thee to come to the enjoyment of it; and when thou art putting on thy clothes that morning, think thou art putting on thy wedding-clothes to go to be married to thy Redeemer. When the messenger of death comes to thee, let him not be dreadful to thee; but look upon him as the messenger that brings thee good tidings of eternal life; — when thou goest up to the scaffold, remember what thou told me: "it was but the chariot to draw thee to thy Father's house;" — when thou layest down thy dear head to receive the last stroke, remember what thou saidst to me: "that though thy head was severed from thy body, yet thy soul shall be united to Jesus Christ, the Head in Heaven;" and though it may seem bitter, that, by the hands of men, we are parted a little sooner than otherwise we should have been, yet let us consider, it is the will of the Father. Besides, we could not have lived much longer together on earth: it will not be long ere we shall enjoy one another in Heaven! O let us comfort one another with these sayings! Oh, be comforted! It is but a little while ere thou shalt be where the weary are at rest, and where the wicked shall cease from troubling thee. Oh, remember, that though thou eat thy dinner with bitter herbs, yet thou shalt have a joyful supper with Jesus Christ at night! — and, my dear, by what I write to you, I do not undertake to be a teacher to thee, for this comfort I have received of the Lord by thee! — I hear a warrant is come to the Lieutenant: I am ready to think it may be concerning thee, to send thee to thy journey's end to-morrow; and that because they may possibly be hindered if they stay until the day appointed; but I am persuaded thou art so far from being afraid of it, that thou dost long for the day; which, next under God, to hear of thy willingness to die, will be the greatest comfort to me in the world!

I can write no more; but commit thee to the hand of that God, with whom thou and I ere long shall be! Farewell, farewell!

LETTER V.

MR. LOVE TO HIS WIFE,

On the day first fixed for him to suffer; but put off to Aug. 22d, 1651.

My dearest Beloved,

I am going to my long home; yet I must write thee a word before I go hence, and shall be seen no more; it is to beg thee to be comforted in my gain, and not to be troubled in thy loss. Labour to suppress thy inward fears, now thou art under outward sorrows: — as thy outward sufferings abound, let thy consolations in Christ abound also.

I know thou art a woman of sorrowful spirit. My time is short; I have but a few words of counsel to give thee, and then I shall leave thee to God, who careth for thee and thine.

1. Whilst thou art under desertions, labour rather to strengthen and clear up thy evidences for Heaven, than question them.

2. Remember, a faith of adherence or reliance on the Lord Jesus brings thee to Heaven, though thou want the faith of evidence or assurance.

3. Labour to find that, and more also in God, which thou hast lost in the creature.

4. Spend not thy days in heaviness for my death. If there were knowledge of things below or sorrow in Heaven, I should grieve to think my beloved should mourn on earth.

5. Sit under a soul-searching ministry. I know thou art not a spungy hearer, to suck in foul water as well as fair. God hath given thee a good understanding, to be able to discern between things

that differ; as the mouth tastes meat, thy ear trieth words.

6. Be conversant in Christian meetings, and much in the exercises of the duties of mortification, in fasting and prayers; yet have respect to the weakness of thy body, and thy present condition.

7. Have a care of thyself and babes, — God will take care of thee and them. I can write no more. Farewell, my dear! Farewell, farewell! These are the last words written by thy dying yet comforted husband,

From the Tower, CHRISTOPHER LOVE.
July 15, 1651.

My dear, I beg thee to be satisfied, — my heart is greatly comforted in God; I can quietly submit to the good pleasure of his will; and I hope thou dost so also. I am delivered by the determinate counsel of God, — the will of the Lord be done! Read for thy comfort, when I am dead and gone, Jer. xlix. 11, and the beginning of 12; Isaiah liv. 5, 6, 7, 8; Psalm cxlvi. 9; 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18; Heb. xii. 6, 7.

LETTER VI.

MRS. LOVE TO HER HUSBAND.

My heavenly Dear,

I call thee so, because God hath put Heaven into thee, before he hath taken thee to Heaven. Thou now beholdest God, Christ, and glory, as in a glass; but to-morrow Heaven's gates will be opened, and thou shalt be in the full enjoyment or all those glories which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither can the heart of man understand. God hath now swallowed up thy heart in the thoughts of Heaven; but ere long, thou shalt be

swallowed up in the enjoyment of Heaven! and no marvel there should be such quietness and calmness in thy spirit whilst thou art sailing in this tempestuous sea, because thou perceivest by the eye of faith, a haven of rest, where thou shalt be richly laden with all the glories of Heaven! O, lift up thy heart with joy when thou layest thy dear head on the block, in the thoughts of this, that thou art laying thy head to rest in thy Father's bosom, which, when thou dost awake, shall be crowned, not with an earthly, fading crown, but with an heavenly, eternal crown of glory!—and be not troubled when thou shalt see a guard of soldiers triumphing with their trumpets about thee; but lift up thy head, and thou shalt behold God with a guard of holy angels, triumphing to receive thee to glory! Be not dismayed at the scoffs and reproaches thou mayest meet with in thy short way to Heaven; for, be assured, God will not only glorify thy body and soul in Heaven, but he will also make the *memory of thee to be glorious on earth!*

O, let not one troubled thought for thy wife and babes arise within thee! thy God will be our God, and our Portion; he will be a Husband to thy widow, and a Father to thy children,—the grace of thy God will be sufficient for us!

Now, my dear, I desire willingly and cheerfully to resign my right in thee to thy Father and my Father, who hath the greatest interest in thee; and confident I am, though men have separated us for a time, yet our God will, ere long, bring us together again, where we shall eternally enjoy one another, never to part more!

O let me hear how God bears up thy heart, and let me taste of those comforts that support thee, that they may be as pillars of marble to bear up my sinking spirit! I can write no more. Farewell, farewell, my Dear, till we meet there, where we shall never bid farewell more; till which time I leave

thee in the bosom of a loving tender-hearted Father; and so I rest,

Till I shall for ever rest in Heaven,

Aug. 21st, 1651. MARY LOVE.

This excellent letter discovers the same triumph over the world in Mrs Love, which her husband so happily experienced. She was not only surrounded by their three children, but with child at this time; yet she passes over that circumstance in silence; and though formerly weak in grace, yet she now animates him by the most encouraging reflections. Thus, "through faith, out of weakness, she was made strong." Heb. xi. 34. — ED.

LETTER VII.

MR. LOVE TO HIS WIFE,
on the day he suffered.

My most gracious Beloved,

I AM now going from a prison to a palace: I have finished my work; I am now to receive my wages! I am going to Heaven, where there are two of my children; and leaving thee on earth, where are three of my babes;—those two above need not my care; but the three below need thine. It comforts me to think two of my children are in the bosom of Abraham, and three of them will be in the arms and care of so tender and godly a mother! I know thou art a woman of a sorrowful spirit, yet be comforted; though thy sorrows be great for thy husband's going out of the world, yet thy pains shall be the less in bringing thy child into the world; thou shalt be a joyful mother, though thou be'st a sad widow! God hath many mercies in store for thee, — the prayers of a dying husband will not be lost! To my shame I speak it, I never prayed so much for thee at liberty, as I have done in prison! I cannot write more; but

I have a few practical counsels to leave with thee, viz.

1. Keep under a sound, orthodox, and soul-searching ministry. Oh, there are many deceivers gone out into the world; but Christ's sheep know his voice, and a stranger will they not follow! Attend on that ministry that teaches the way of God in truth, and follow Solomon's advice: *Cease to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the ways of knowledge.* Prov. xix. 27.

2. Bring up thy children in the knowledge and admonition of the Lord. The mother ought to be a teacher in the father's absence. *The words which his mother taught him* (Prov. xxxi. 1); and Timothy was instructed by his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice. 2 Tim. i. 5.

3. Pray in thy family daily, that thy dwelling may be in the number of the families that do call on God.

4. Labour for a meek and quiet spirit; which is in the sight of God of great price. 1 Peter iii. 4.

5. Pore not on the comforts thou wantest; but on the mercies thou hast.

6. Look rather at God's end in afflicting, than at the measure and degree of thy afflictions.

7. Labour to clear up thy evidences for Heaven, when God takes from thee the comforts of earth, that, as thy sufferings do abound, so thy consolations in Christ may abound much more. 2 Cor. i. 4.

8. Though it is good to maintain a holy jealousy of the deceitfulness of thy heart, yet it is evil for thee to cherish fears and doubts about the truth of thy graces. If ever I had confidence touching the graces of another, I have confidence of grace in thee. I can say of thee as Peter did of Sylvanus, *I am persuaded that this is the grace of God wherein thou standest.* 1 Peter v. 12. Oh, my dear soul, wherefore dost thou doubt, whose heart hath been upright, whose walkings have been holy, &c. I could venture my soul in thy soul's stead!—such confidence have I of thee!

9. When thou findest thy heart secure, presumptuous, and proud, then pore upon corruption more than upon grace; but when thou findest thy heart doubting and unbelieving, then look on thy graces, not on thy infirmities.

10. Study the covenant of grace and merits of Christ, and then be troubled if thou canst. Thou art interested in such a covenant that accepts purposes for performances, desires for deeds, sincerity for perfection, the righteousness of another, viz. that of Jesus Christ, as if it were thine own. Oh my love, rest, rest then in the love of God, in the bosom of Christ!

11. Swallow up thy will in the will of God: — it is a bitter cup we are to drink, but it is the cup our Father hath put into our hands. When Paul was to go to suffer at Jerusalem, the Christians could say, *The will of the Lord be done!* O say thou, when I go to Tower-hill, *The will of the Lord be done.* Acts xxi. 14.

12. Rejoice in my joy. To mourn for me inordinately, argues that either thou enviest or suspectest my happiness. *The joy of the Lord is my strength.* Nehem. viii. 10. O let it be thine also! Dear wife, farewell! I will call thee *Wife* no more; I shall see thy face no more; yet I am not much troubled; for now I am going to meet the Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom I shall be eternally married! Thy dying,

yet most affectionate friend till death,

CHRISTOPHER LOVE.

From the Tower of London,
22d Aug. 1651.
The day of my glorification.

Who can describe the feelings of Mrs. Love, having a spiritual as well as natural love to this eminent sufferer, being pregnant at the time, and surrounded by his dear children! —ED.

The strange and wonderful Predictions of Mr. Christopher Love, Minister of the Gospel, at Lawrence Jewry, London; who was beheaded on Tower-Hill, in the Time of Oliver Cromwell.

A FEW nights after he was sentenced to be beheaded on Tower Hill, which was on the 22d day of August, 1651, ten days before his appointed time, by the sentence he received at the bar, being one night visited by two of his intimate acquaintances, or *bosom friends*, as he himself called them, they began to complain of the cruelties of the times, and the malice and usage of time-serving brethren; to which Mr. Love answered, "And think you this an evil time? No, no; this is the very time when grace and true godliness can be distinguished from hypocrisy. Many have followed Christ hitherto for the loaves, and are now turned back for the roughness of the way, and the sore trial and tribulation which others met with who are gone before them! There are many in London at this very day, who think to go to Heaven in their gilded coaches, and have denied Christ's cause before men (against whom I now witness); and Christ, in his never-failing word, has promised to deny all such before his Father and the holy angels. This is the time to discern between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not. They formerly were my familiar acquaintances in fellowship and sweet converse. I sent this day to have a few words with them here in the prison; but they would not come,—for their countenance is fallen, their consciences wounded. They cannot look me in the face; because I knew of their resolution, and was a witness to their perjury: but ah!

how will they look the blessed Jesus in the face in the morning of the resurrection! What answer or excuse will they have for what they have done? O foolish people, who think to escape the cross and come to the crown! I tell you, nay; you must all suffer persecution who follow the Lamb! — we must be hated of all nations for Christ's sake, —we must come, through great tribulation, through the fiery furnace of Affliction, before we can enter the land of joy and felicity! Know ye not, that the souls that were slain for the testimony of Jesus are placed under the altar? Happy, happy are those men at this day, and ever shall be happy, who suffer for Christ's sake in a right and charitable way, — through love to his cause and honesty of heart! — not through pride and hypocrisy, without the root of the matter, to have it said that they died martyrs: these are they who will miss their mark; and those who denied the call and looked back, shall never have the honour to find it! I am now pointed out by many to be in a destitute and forlorn condition; but I would not exchange my state; no, not for all the glory that's on the earth! I find my Redeemer's love stronger in my bonds than ever I did in the days of my liberty; therefore, I hold living here as death itself. I am as full of love and joy in the Holy Spirit as ever bottle was filled with new wine. I am ready to cry out, 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me:' I will not take upon me to prophesy; nevertheless, the Spirit of the Lord causeth me to utter, — This usurped authority, now in the hands of Cromwell, shall shortly be at an end, — England shall be blessed with meek Kings and mild governments; powerful preachers and dull hearers, — good sermons to them will be as music to a sleepy man: they shall hear, but not understand; nor lay the word to heart, to practise it in their lives, to walk by it! O England, thou shalt wax old in wicked-

ness! — thy sins abound like those of Sodom; thy voluptuousness shall cry aloud for vengeance; the Lord shall threaten and chastise thee; yet, in mercy and love, will he look upon those that fear him and call upon his name: he will spare and save them alive in the days of his anger, when the wicked shall be sifted from amongst you, as the chaff is sifted from amongst the wheat; for out of thee, O England, shall a bright star arise, whose light and voice shall make the heathen to quake, and knock under with submission to the Gospel of Jesus! — he shall be as a sound of thunder in the ears of the wicked, and as a lantern to the Jews, to lead them to the knowledge of Jesus, the only Son of God, and true Messiah, whom they so long mistrusted; for the short work spoken of by the apostle, which the Lord is to make upon the earth, in the latter age of the world, cannot be far off.

'Observe, my dear friends, while you live, my calculations of the dates in the book of the Revelation, and in Daniel, which the Spirit of the Lord led me into; for the Lord will reveal it to some of his own, ere that time come; for the nearer the time is, the seals shall be taken away, and more and more shall be revealed to God's people; for the Lord doth nothing without he reveal it, by his Spirit, to his servants the prophets. He destroyed not the old world without the knowledge of Noah: he did not overthrow Sodom and Gomorrah without the knowledge of Abraham. I do not mean now that any new prophet shall arise; but the Lord, by his Spirit, shall cause knowledge to abound among his people, whereby the old prophecies shall be clearly and perfectly understood; and I die in that thought, and really believe that my calculation on the Revelation by St. John, and the prophecy which St. Jerome copied off, and translated out of the Hebrew language, as it is written on Seth's Pillar in Damas-

eus,—which pillar is said to have stood since before the flood; and was built by Seth, Adam's son; and written by Enoch, the prophet; as likewise the holy precepts, whereby the patriarch walked before the law was given to Moses; which were also engraven on the said pillar, whereof many Jews have copies in their own language, written on parchment, and engraven on brass and copper; but the alteration of the date makes them to stagger at it, not knowing that the dates were to be altered by the birth of Christ. First, This prophecy is entitled, "A Short Work of the Lord's in the Latter Age of the World."— Great earthquakes and commotions, by sea and land, shall come in the year of God 1779. Great wars in Germany and America in 1780. The destruction of Popery, of Babylon's Fall, in the year 1790. God will be known by many in the year 1795. This will produce a great man. The stars will wander, and the moon turn as blood, in the year 1800. Africa, Asia, and America will tremble in 1803. A great earthquake over all the world in 1805. God will be universally known by all. Then a general reformation and peace for ever, when the people shall learn war no more! Happy is the man that liveth to see this day!'

I rather leave it to every reader to apply these Predictions to the different events which have taken, or may take place, than offer any fulfilment of my own observations on them.—Ed.

THE END

ERRATA.

Page.	Line.	
16,	17,	*for* obsure, *read* obscure
19,	15,	*for* consider, *read* wonder
35,	36,	*for* hinds in Christ's flock and lambs, *read* kids at lambs in Christ's flock
79,	14,	*for* Hermogenies, *read* Hermogenes
104,	12,	*for* Phigellus, *read* Phygellus
124,	10,	*for* prize-communion, *read* prizing communion
136,	3,	*for* Hernon, *read* Hermon
139,	4 from bottom,	*for* same the smell, *read* the same smell
148,	3 from bottom,	*for* hath, *read* had
155,	20,	*for* of myself, *read* by myself
169,	30,	*for* power, *read* property
179,	22,	*for* whether, *read* whither
——	34,	*for* he and his, *read* it and its
187,	28,	*for* diseasas, *read* diseases

WRONG QUOTATIONS.

63,	7,	*for* Romans vi. 10, *read* xvi. 20.
124,	—,	*for* Acts iii. 1, *read* iii. 8.
152,	15,	*for* John xxi. 15, *read* Cant. iv. 10.
182,	26,	*for* Psalm lviii, *read* Psalm lxviii.

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